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UNICEF report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit

Summary

In accordance with Executive Board decision 2001/4, the present report summarizes the response of UNICEF to the recommendations contained in the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) issued from January through December 2016. Of the 11 reports, 10 contained recommendations directly relevant to UNICEF.

* E/ICEF/2017/5.

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I. Introduction

1. The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) annually issues reports and notes addressed to the executive heads of United Nations organizations that have accepted its statute. Each report or note contains a series of recommendations for consideration by either the executive heads or the legislative/governing bodies of the organizations. The UNICEF report to its Executive Board provides, inter alia, a brief overview of the organization's response to relevant reports issued by the JIU from January through December 2016 and comments on JIU recommendations that have been directed to UNICEF (see annex I). The complete reports and notes of the JIU and any additional annexes and comments, e.g., by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), can be obtained through the JIU website (http://www.unjiu.org) or through the hyperlinked titles of each report in section II. CEB comments available at the time of drafting of the present report have also been included.

2. Since the submission of the previous report (E/ICEF/2016/8) to the Executive Board at its annual session of 2016, UNICEF has continued to work with the JIU on various reviews conducted under its auspices and to follow up on the recommendations contained in the reports. This interaction on issues of common interest has increased the relevance of the JIU reports, improved the implementation of their recommendations and enhanced transparency. Furthermore, as a member organization of the CEB, UNICEF has continued to contribute to the drafting of consolidated responses to various JIU reports.

II. Overview of Joint Inspection Unit reports issued in 2016

3. The 10 reports of direct relevance to UNICEF are summarized below. For additional comments on the relevant recommendations, see annex I.

A. Succession planning in the United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2016/2)

4. UNICEF welcomes the report, which identifies the challenges and good practices inherent in this crucial component of workforce planning, and proposes solutions and benchmarks to improve succession planning activities. Succession planning is a core function of the UNICEF Division of Human Resources. The Senior Staff Rotation and Reassignment Exercise, which is in its twelfth successful year, is a global annual exercise aimed at fostering mobility and promoting the systematic and timely succession planning of senior positions within UNICEF. Further, the UNICEF leadership competencies have been revised and a competency framework is being developed, with implementation expected in December 2017. (CEB comments[1] available in A/71/393/Add.1)

B. Comprehensive review of United Nations system support for small island developing States: initial findings (JIU/REP/2016/3)

5. The report was prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 69/288. It presents the initial findings of the JIU, with a more comprehensive report to follow. As the review was limited to consideration of the work of the Secretariat and

[1] Hyperlinks to comments by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination that were available at the time of publication are provided.

agencies and of the work and functioning of the Inter-agency Consultative Group on Small Island Developing States, it did not cover the support activities by the funds and programmes. The report was provided to UNICEF for information only. (CEB comments available in A/71/324/Add.1)

C. Fraud prevention, detection and response in United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2016/4)

6. UNICEF is committed to preventing, detecting and deterring fraud, corruption or other irregularity and to taking action where it is suspected or detected, and achieving adequate recovery. It has a policy prohibiting and combatting fraud and corruption, with investigative capability by the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations (OIAI). UNICEF appreciates the recommendations made in the report, having agreed with all but one: on strengthening the referral of fraud cases to national enforcement authorities, as this is under the authority of the Secretary-General. Notably, UNICEF has started the process of developing a comprehensive anti-fraud strategy, which will provide clear guidance on roles and responsibilities for the various aspects of managing fraud, and which will also identify a clear pathway for remedial action and the recovery of losses. (CEB comments available in A/71/731/Add.1)

D. Evaluation of the contribution of the United Nations development system to strengthening national capacities for statistical analysis and data collection to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally-agreed goals (JIU/REP/2016/5)

7. UNICEF recognizes the importance of national statistical capacity development at the country level as a means of achieving national development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals, and welcomes the renewed emphasis on and call for greater support and investment in such efforts across the entire United Nations system. UNICEF prioritizes these objectives on an ongoing basis through the work of its country programmes of cooperation in over 150 countries and in targeted efforts by means of surveys, including the multiple indicator cluster survey, now in its sixth round. UNICEF also supports countries by means of dedicated workshops on statistical capacity development in sectoral and thematic areas and in line with national development priorities. (CEB comments available in A/71/431/Add.1)

E. Meta-evaluation and synthesis of United Nations Development Assistance Framework evaluations, with a particular focus on poverty eradication (JIU/REP/2016/6)

8. UNICEF welcomes the JIU report on the meta-evaluation and synthesis of United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) evaluations, as it is the first-ever such exercise and responds to inter-agency demand. UNICEF contributed to the CEB comments and agrees that the JIU report provides key lessons and recommendations for improving the coverage, quality and use of UNDAF evaluations. UNICEF will be pleased to contribute technical inputs and resources to future UNDAF evaluations, which are to be coordinated through the resident coordinator system, with the support of United Nations country teams. (CEB comments available in A/71/533/Add.1)

F. Comprehensive review of United Nations system support for small island developing States: final findings (JIU/REP/2016/7)

9. UNICEF welcomes the report, and agrees that there is room to strengthen coordination and accountabilities and to leverage synergies for the contribution of better results to small island developing States. Through its multi-country programmes, UNICEF contributes to the child-related aspects of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, with specific indicators, baselines and targets to monitor progress. Effective coordination among United Nations organizations and government bodies is an integral part of the UNICEF strategy.

G. State of the internal audit function in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2016/8)

10. UNICEF welcomes the report and broadly agrees with the key assessments of the JIU analysis across 23 United Nations system organizations. The report makes a valuable contribution to further enhancing the maturity of the system-wide internal audit function through its advocacy for stronger governance structures to augment independence and effectiveness; the promotion of a strengthened second line of defence within United Nations system organizations; encouraging the development of the audit function's strategic roadmap; supporting thematic assessments; and expanding the use of data analytics. The report also emphasizes the critical governance role of oversight committees and the importance of meeting the conditions necessary for their effectiveness, independence and expertise. UNICEF is pleased to note that it is well positioned to implement most of the recommended governance structures and practices for an internal audit function as identified in the report, and that action is already in progress to generate further benefits in areas such as the use of technology in internal auditing.

H. Safety and security in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2016/9)

11. The review covers the United Nations and its funds, programmes and specialized agencies, focusing on the services provided by the Department of Safety and Security, as the primary coordinating actor of the United Nations security management system. The review addresses strategic system-wide issues and does not look into specific technical areas of safety and security.

12. Generally, the reference point of the JIU review is the 2008 report "Towards a culture of security and accountability" produced by the Independent Panel on Safety and Security of United Nations Personnel and Premises Worldwide. There has been significant progress in the United Nations security management system that does not seem to be fully reflected in the report, specifically with regard to policy development, training programmes for staff, jointly funded activities, minimum operating security standards enhancements, additional funds for the Department of Safety and Security and an active participation in and strengthened collaboration with the Inter-Agency Security Management Network.

I. Knowledge management in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2016/10)

13. UNICEF finds the review findings and best practices presented in the report to be useful and will consider their applicability in strengthening the UNICEF knowledge management framework.

J. Administrative support services: the role of service centres in redesigning administrative service delivery (JIU/REP/2016/11)

14. UNICEF found the report to be useful, particularly in recommending a review of contract modalities for locally recruited professional expertise in shared services environments. UNICEF notes that, contrary to information contained in the report, the shared services centres of several United Nations organizations have begun to exchange best practices and to work together to examine ways to reduce investment costs and increase value for money at a faster rate than might otherwise have been achieved.

III. Status of Joint Inspection Unit recommendations addressed to UNICEF

15. In 2016, the JIU issued 11 reports containing a total of 84 recommendations. Ten of those reports together contained a total of 52 recommendations (62 per cent) that were relevant to UNICEF, including 35 addressed to executive heads and 17 to Executive Board/legislative bodies. The acceptance and implementation status of the 52 recommendations is presented in annex I, and can be summarized as follows, as of March 2017:

(a) UNICEF accepted 43 recommendations (83 per cent), of which 17 (33 per cent) had been implemented, and 26 (50 per cent) were in progress;

(b) Seven recommendations (13 per cent) were still under consideration for acceptance;

(c) Two recommendations (4 per cent) relevant to UNICEF, but not under its sole remit for implementation, were under CEB consideration.

16. Annex II details the status of recommendations made by the JIU prior to 2016, which were still open as of March 2017. In summary:

(a) The total number of open recommendations was 29, including 22 issued in the period 2013-2015, and 7 during the period 2008-2012;

(b) Of the 29 open recommendations, 28 were being implemented and 1 (issued in 2015) was still under consideration.

Annex I

Summary of the status of Joint Inspection Unit recommendations addressed to UNICEF, January-December 2016

Relevant recommendations	*Remarks*
Succession planning in the United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2016/2)	
1. Recommendations addressed to the Executive Board/legislative body	
Recommendation 1 Exercise an oversight role and examine the causes for the lack of, and/or the delay in, the introduction of formal succession planning including the adequacy of current funding; and develop formal succession planning without any further delay, by the end of 2017.	**Accepted and in progress** Succession planning, a global process with a corporate view centralized in headquarters, has been a core function of the Division of Human Resources in UNICEF. The Senior Staff Rotation and Reassignment Exercise, launched in 2005, is an annual corporate exercise aimed at fostering mobility, promoting systematic and timely succession planning for senior positions within UNICEF (e.g., Representative and Associate/Deputy Director posts), and facilitating the identification of suitable candidates for leadership posts globally.
2. Recommendations addressed to the executive heads	
Recommendation 2 Instruct human resources management offices to develop and implement appropriate frameworks for succession planning strategies, and devise appropriate guidelines on the succession planning process without any further delay, by the end of 2017.	**Accepted and in progress** The UNICEF leadership competencies have been revised and a competency framework is being developed, with implementation targeted for December 2017.
Recommendation 3 Instruct human resources management offices to adopt the benchmarks set out in the present report with a view to ensuring that their organizations have a sound succession planning process, and should report on the progress made.	**Accepted and in progress** UNICEF and its Division of Human Resources will continue to ensure an effective succession planning process and set the benchmarks for comparative measures and indicators.
Recommendation 4 Ensure that succession planning is reinstated as a main agenda item of the Human Resources Network of the High-level Committee on Management, and given the utmost attention and most serious consideration in the future sessions of the Network.	**Accepted and in progress** UNICEF supports the reinstatement of succession planning as an agenda item of the Human Resources Network of the High-level Committee on Management.
Comprehensive review of United Nations system support for small island development States: initial findings (JIU/REP/2016/3)	
No recommendations addressed to UNICEF.	

Relevant recommendations	*Remarks*

Fraud prevention, detection and response in United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2016/4)

1. Recommendations addressed to the Executive Board/legislative body

Recommendation 16	**Accepted and implemented**
Place on respective agendas a permanent or standing item relating to fraud prevention, detection and response; review on an annual basis the consolidated and comprehensive management report presented by the executive head on anti-fraud policy and activities; and provide high-level guidance and oversight on fraud-related matters.	The review of the annual report of Office of Internal Audit and Investigations (OIAI), which provides this information, is a standing item of the UNICEF Executive Board agenda.

2. Recommendations addressed to the executive heads

Recommendation 2	**Accepted and implemented**
Develop a corporate anti-fraud policy taking into account leading practices in the public and private sectors. The policy should be presented to the legislative and governing bodies for information, adoption and/or endorsement and should be reviewed and updated regularly.	The existing anti-fraud policy of UNICEF is in line with best practice. UNICEF agrees that it should be transparent to its governing body with regard to fraud-related policies. However, the governing body does not need to adopt or endorse management's operational policy on fraud, as doing so could compromise the ability of UNICEF to move quickly to adjust the policy if needed. It is important to recall that the issue of fraud is addressed in the annual report of OIAI to the governing board.
Recommendation 3	**Accepted and implemented**
Take expeditious action to designate an overall corporate manager or entity at senior level to be the custodian of the anti-fraud policy and be responsible for the implementation, monitoring and periodic review of the policy.	UNICEF has effectively adopted this recommendation. The Deputy Executive Director for Management has overall responsibility with regard to the organization's anti-fraud policy.
Recommendation 4	**Accepted and implemented**
Establish a dedicated anti-fraud training and fraud awareness strategy for all members of the organization. At a minimum, anti-fraud training should be mandatory for staff in functional areas most prone to fraud and staff operating in fragile and high-risk field environments.	The UNICEF ethics and integrity e-learning course is mandatory for all UNICEF staff. The Supply Division integrates ethics in procurement training in a number of events: (a) orientation for all new Supply Division staff, delivered twice a year; (b) and introduction to procurement for all procurement staff, delivered twice a year; and (c) the forthcoming e-learning course on procurement.
Recommendation 5	**Accepted and in progress**
Conduct a comprehensive corporate fraud risk assessment, as an integral part of their enterprise risk management system or as a separate exercise, addressing fraud risks at all levels of their respective organization, including headquarters and field offices, as well as internal and external fraud risks. Such	UNICEF performs comprehensive enterprise risk assessments at all levels, including fraud risk assessment. The results of individual assessments have been consolidated and reviewed globally by the global management team. UNICEF is in the process of strengthening the enterprise risk assessment strategy, which will include annual updates.

Relevant recommendations	*Remarks*
assessments shall be conducted at least biennially at the corporate level, and more frequently, based on need, at the operational level.	
Recommendation 6	**Accepted and in progress**
Develop organization-specific comprehensive anti-fraud strategies and action plans for implementing their respective fraud policies. Such anti-fraud strategies should be based on the organization's corporate fraud risk assessments and shall be an integral part of the overall organizational strategies and operational objectives. Based on the level of fraud risk, proportionate resources should be dedicated to operationalize the strategies and action plans.	UNICEF is developing and implementing a formal comprehensive anti-fraud strategy in 2017. Current anti-fraud mechanisms are implemented through existing policies and procedures. On the basis of the global risk assessment performed, a risk mitigation plan to address fraud was formalized that addresses the work of UNICEF with partners as well as the capacity of staff. Resources have also been allocated to procure tools that will allow the organization to better manage risk and perform data mining to identify suspicious activity.
Recommendation 7	**Accepted and in progress**
Initiate a review of their internal control framework to ensure that proportionate anti-fraud controls do exist and that fraud risks identified in the fraud risk assessments are adequately addressed in the internal control frameworks.	UNICEF adopted the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (COSO) internal control framework in 2012. At the time, all policies and procedures were reviewed and strengthened for risk management, including fraud awareness. Key UNICEF staff have undergone COSO training, and funding has been set aside to review the organization's framework for compliance with the 2013 standards, to be completed in 2017. In parallel, UNICEF continuously works to improve and strengthen its controls and currently has several initiatives under development.
Recommendation 8	**Accepted and in progress**
Ensure that statements of internal controls address the adequacy of organization-wide anti-fraud controls, in accordance with good practices and applicable international standards. In the absence of a formal statement of internal controls, executive heads should certify in their annual reports to legislative and governing bodies that their organization has in place proportionate anti-fraud controls based on fraud risk assessments, and that appropriate fraud prevention, detection, response and data collection procedures and processes exist.	The UNICEF financial statements for 2015 contain a statement of internal controls over financial reporting. In tandem, with the review for the 2013 COSO framework, the organization plans to implement governance, risk and compliance strategies and tools that will enable it to issue a statement of internal controls on the organization-wide controls. Funds have been budgeted for this endeavour in 2016-2017.
Recommendation 9	**Accepted and implemented**
Instruct their legal offices to review and update the legal instruments for engaging third parties, such as vendors and implementing partners, with particular attention to anti-fraud clauses and provisions.	UNICEF has already implemented the recommendations, which are reflected in its standard agreement with individual consultants, in the recently-issued standard contract with programme implementing partners and in the revised standard General Terms and Conditions of contracts.

Relevant recommendations	*Remarks*
Recommendation 10 Ensure that proportionate fraud prevention and detection capabilities are an integral part of automation systems' functionalities, including automated activity reports and data-mining modules in their respective enterprise resource planning systems (ERPs).	**Accepted and in progress** UNICEF has implemented a number of dashboards that highlight a variety of compliance issues. In addition, UNICEF will be implementing governance, risk management and compliance tools, which will include transaction level monitoring software to strengthen fraud prevention and detection within VISION, its SAP-based ERP. UNICEF also employs Approva to detect the segregation of duty conflicts in VISION.
Recommendation 11 Revise their whistle-blower policies with a view to adopting good practices, and extend the duty to report fraud and other misconduct to contract employees, United Nations volunteers, interns and other non-staff, as well as to third parties, including vendors, suppliers, and implementing partners.	**Accepted and implemented** The current anti-fraud policy extends the duty to report fraud and misconduct to non-staff entities.
Recommendation 12 Implement the good practice of establishing a central intake mechanism for all fraud allegations in their respective organizations. In the interim, for organizations with decentralized intake mechanisms, immediate action should be taken to: (a) establish an obligation for decentralized intake units to report to a central authority any allegations received, ongoing cases under investigation and closed cases, indicating the action taken; and (b) establish formal intake procedures and guidelines, including: clear criteria for the preliminary assessment, the official, office or function authorized to make the assessment, the process to be followed and the arrangements for reporting on the results of the preliminary assessments.	**Accepted and implemented** UNICEF has a whistle-blower policy and mechanisms for the intake of fraud allegations. Reference is made to the annual report of OIAI for a discussion on the work performed.
Recommendation 13 Ensure that the investigation function of their respective organizations establishes key performance indicators for the conduct and completion of investigations, and has adequate capacity to investigate, based on a risk categorization and the type and complexity of the investigations.	**Accepted and implemented** Reference is made to the annual report of OIAI for a discussion on the work performed.
Recommendation 14 Strengthen existing protocols and procedures for referrals of fraud cases (and other misconduct) to national enforcement authorities and courts for criminal and civil proceedings, as well as for asset recovery, and ensure that referrals are done in a timely and effective manner.	**Under consideration** This recommendation needs further consideration and, at this time, UNICEF is not in a position to adopt it. The critical factor in connection with referrals to Member State law enforcement authorities is the issue of privileges and immunities, as the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) report notes. Those privileges and immunities are under the exclusive control of the

Relevant recommendations	*Remarks*
	Secretary-General (or, in the case of the specialized agencies, the executive heads), not the relevant legislative/governing bodies.
Recommendation 15	**Accepted and implemented**
Present, on an annual basis, a consolidated and comprehensive management report on the performance of anti-fraud activities, based on key performance indicators. The report shall include, inter alia, the level of fraud exposure, status of compliance with anti-fraud policies, fraud statistics, sanctions imposed, fraud losses and recovery of assets, and lessons learned.	Reference is made to the annual report of OIAI for a discussion on the work performed.
Recommendation 16	**Accepted and implemented**
Place on their respective agendas a permanent or standing item relating to fraud prevention, detection and response; review on an annual basis the consolidated and comprehensive management report presented by the executive head on anti-fraud policy and activities; and provide high-level guidance and oversight on fraud-related matters.	The annual report of OIAI, a standing item on the agenda, provides this information to the UNICEF Executive Board.

Evaluation of the contribution of the United Nations development system to strengthening national capacities for statistical analysis and data collection to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally-agreed goals (JIU/REP/2016/5)

1. Recommendations addressed to the Executive Board/legislative body

Recommendation 1	**Accepted and in progress**
Make national statistical capacity development a major strategic priority of the United Nations system entities addressing production, dissemination and use of official statistics, and should call on all Member States to redirect the financial resources necessary to support all three areas.	UNICEF is committed to prioritizing evidence generation on the situation of children, including support to national statistical capacity development, throughout its country programmes.
Recommendation 2	**Accepted and in progress**
Reaffirm that the principal goal of the United Nations system support for national statistical capacity development is the use of national statistics for supporting the achievement of national development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals, and in this regard, requests United Nations system organizations to make all efforts to support achievement of this goal.	UNICEF is committed to strengthening national statistical capacity development and the use of national statistics for supporting the achievement of development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals. UNICEF prioritizes this on an ongoing basis throughout the work of its country programmes and through the implementation of capacity-building at the global scale, such as the country support provided through multiple indicator cluster survey and other sectoral surveys to develop capacity in data collection and workshops for data analysis and dissemination.

Relevant recommendations	*Remarks*
Recommendation 3	**Accepted and in progress**
Establish a network (a working group or task force) that will bring together the different entities' policy, programme and statistics departments in order to define how to better support more effective use of statistics by national stakeholders to achieve national development goals and should develop system-wide guidance for United Nations system entities on this issue.	UNICEF remains committed to facilitating linkages among policy, programmes and statistics entities at all levels in support of this objective.
Recommendation 5	**Accepted and in progress**
Ensure that national statistical capacity development is a strategic area of support for all United Nations country teams, recognizing that the role will vary significantly between countries as determined by the national authorities.	UNICEF is committed to prioritizing evidence generation on the situation of children, including support to national statistical capacity development, throughout its country programmes on the basis of the specific needs, priorities and country context.
2. Recommendations addressed to the executive heads	
Recommendation 4	**Under Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) consideration**
The General Assembly should request the Secretary-General, in the context of the 2017-2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review and the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda, to develop a strategic framework for the next five years regarding United Nations system integrated support for national statistical capacity development at the global, regional and country levels, setting out the roles and areas of work for entities at all three levels.	UNICEF is prepared to support the development of this strategic framework, should the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to implement the recommendation.
Meta-evaluation and synthesis of United Nations Development Assistance Framework evaluations, with a particular focus on poverty eradication (JIU/REP/2016/6)	
1. Recommendations addressed to the Executive Board/legislative body	
No recommendations addressed to UNICEF	
2. Recommendations addressed to the executive heads	
Recommendation 4	**Accepted and in progress**
Coordinate evaluation activities at the country level so that such activities can be better integrated into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) evaluation process.	As part of the UNDAF process, UNICEF contributes to the planning and implementation of UNDAF monitoring and evaluation initiatives, which is coordinated by the Resident Coordinator's office. The strengthening of the office for the improved coordination of monitoring and evaluation activities is a continuing effort that requires particular attention in some countries. Through its regional and country offices, UNICEF will continue to play its role in being transparent and strategic in formulating its country-level evaluation plans to further strengthen the coordination of UNDAF evaluation activities.

Relevant recommendations	*Remarks*
Comprehensive review of United Nations system support for small island developing States: final findings (JIU/REP/2016/7)	
1. Recommendations addressed to the Executive Board/legislative body	
Recommendation 1 The governing bodies of the United Nations system and of the multilateral environment agreements, taking into account the findings of the comprehensive review, should give precise system-wide coordinated guidance to the organizations so as to ensure that the priorities of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway are mainstreamed in the strategic plans, within the realm of the organizations' mandates, and should encourage all stakeholders to make sufficient and predictable resources available for the effective and accelerated implementation of the Pathway.	**Under consideration** The first part of the recommendation is under system-wide consideration (CEB comments pending). The second part of the recommendation (i.e., mainstreaming in the strategic plans and making sufficient and predictable resources available) is addressed in recommendations 2 and 6.
Recommendation 2 Ensure that the strategic plans and work programmes of the system organizations include specific objectives related to the implementation of the Samoa Pathway, within the realm of their respective mandates, to be measured against a set of established key performance indicators to monitor and report on the achievements.	**Accepted and implemented** UNICEF, through its (multi-) country programmes, provides a contribution to the child-related aspects of the Samoa Pathway, which integrated results frameworks with specific indicators, baselines and targets, with progress reported on an annual basis that are reported annually.
Recommendation 3 Encourage organizations to ensure that the activities in support of sustainable development of SIDS, within the realm of the mandate of each organization, are aligned with the regional and national priorities identified by the Governments of those States, regional organizations and SIDS development partners, so as to foster the implementation of the Samoa Pathway as the blueprint of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of SIDS.	**Accepted and implemented** In developing (multi-) country programmes, UNICEF consults with national and regional bodies and other stakeholders to ensure alignment with their priorities as well as with the global agenda on small island developing States and the Sustainable Development Goals.
Recommendation 4 Coordinate the planning and implementation of capacity-building activities in close consultation with the small island developing States and all partners for development so as to strengthen effectiveness and efficiency in providing support to achieve the goals defined in the Samoa Pathway, while avoiding saturation of the absorptive capacity of SIDS at the country level.	**Accepted and in progress** UNICEF supports effective coordination among United Nations agencies and government bodies.

Relevant recommendations	*Remarks*
Recommendation 6 Encourage the allocation of predictable multi-year funding to facilitate the effective implementation of programmatic activities in support of the small island developing States, based on needs assessments prepared by the United Nations system organizations in consultation with SIDS and their relevant partners.	**Under consideration** UNICEF has a broad presence in small island developing States. According to UNICEF Executive Board directives, a regular resource allocation formula is in place to ensure consistent and predictable funding to all UNICEF (multi-) country programmes, on the basis of the available global annual resources. For UNICEF, need is based on an analysis of gross national income per capita, child population and under-five mortality. While UNICEF has no specific concern with the allocation of predictable multi-year funding and allocates core funds annually, it has concerns regarding the JIU stipulation "based on needs assessments prepared by the United Nations system organizations in consultation with SIDS and their relevant partners", as this is not consistent with UNICEF Executive Board directives.
Recommendation 7 Ensure, based on the ongoing work of the United Nations Statistical Commission and, when relevant, on the work of the inter-agency forums and expert groups created to advise Member States, that the specificity of SIDS is explicitly considered in defining the elements of monitoring and accountability frameworks to report on progress made on the Sustainable Development Goals, so that processes and indicators are adapted to their needs and priorities identified at the national and regional levels.	**Under consideration** The Sustainable Development Goals are global targets, which Member States are expected to adapt according to their national context. The small island developing States face additional challenges associated with climate change and disaster risk reduction that go beyond the global targets and indicators. In addition, as part of its mandate, UNICEF monitors the situation of children with a list of indicators, many of which are also Goal indicators. Where relevant to the country context, UNICEF may support data collection efforts by national statistical offices and other partners.
Recommendation 8 Coordinate their efforts in designing monitoring and accountability frameworks and tools adapted to the capacity of SIDS to monitor and report on the implementation of the Samoa Pathway and other sustainable development-related global mandates, while avoiding the burden of multiple reporting frameworks.	**Accepted and in progress** UNICEF closely coordinates with other United Nations agencies through its efforts in United Nations Sustainable Development Frameworks, which highlight the contribution of the United Nations system to the 2030 Agenda and the Samoa Pathway. As part of its (multi-) country programmes, UNICEF supports national Governments in monitoring and reporting on child-related efforts as part of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Samoa Pathway. Moreover, UNICEF is working with other governmental, international and regional partners to ensure that common and appropriate data are collected and analysed to ensure that progress on the implementation of the Samoa Pathway can be adequately assessed.

Relevant recommendations	*Remarks*
2. Recommendations addressed to the executive heads	
Recommendation 5 The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should ensure the participation of their organizations in the process led by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development to actively contribute to addressing the specificity of SIDS as a special case with tailor-made solutions, and should also ensure that new parameters of eligibility are designed for better access to financing for development for SIDS.	**Under consideration** UNICEF has no concerns on this recommendation in principle, but notes that proposals and discussions within the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development are bound by the commitments of Member States in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. UNICEF reverts to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which is the convener of the Inter-Agency Task Force, to position the concerns of small island developing States in the agenda where and when appropriate.
State of the internal audit function in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2016/8)	
1. Recommendations addressed to the Executive Board/legislative body	
Recommendation 1 Ensure that heads of internal audit/oversight and oversight committee Chairs attend the meetings of the governing bodies at least annually and are given the opportunity to respond to questions raised about their respective annual reports.	**Accepted and implemented** The Director of OIAI and the Audit Advisory Committee Chair (or his/her alternate) attend the annual session of the UNICEF Executive Board each year when their respective annual reports are tabled for discussion, and both have the opportunity to respond to questions from the Executive Board.
Recommendation 9 Ensure that the conditions for effective, independent, expert oversight committees are in place, and that the committees are fully functional in line with previous JIU recommendations, as reinforced in this report.	**Under consideration** UNICEF supports this recommendation, and will consult with the Executive Board on how best to ensure the Audit Advisory Committee continues to have the necessary effectiveness, independence and expertise.
2. Recommendations addressed to the executive head	
Recommendation 2 Involve the oversight committees and consult with the governing bodies in the hiring of the heads of internal audit/oversight, and in the termination of their tenure.	**Under consideration** The charter of the UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee requires that the committee be consulted on the appointment, removal or contract renewal of the Director of OIAI. UNICEF will consult with the Executive Board on how best to include the Committee in the process.
Recommendation 4 Heads of internal audit/oversight of United Nations system organizations who have not yet done so should consolidate in their annual/periodic or other report findings of recurring issues emanating from individual internal audit reports that cut across various offices, units or departments so as to enable the executive heads to systematically address them.	**Accepted and implemented** For several years, OIAI has been providing a quarterly report to the Executive Director and the Audit Advisory Committee, with detailed analysis and commentary on the consolidated results of audits and investigations. The annual report of OIAI also provides a systematic account of key cross-cutting themes and issues. OIAI continues to refine this reporting and analysis to ensure that it best supports executive management in identifying and addressing recurring issues.

Relevant recommendations	*Remarks*
Recommendation 5 Ensure that their internal audit services have adequate financial and human resources to expand the use of information technology auditing techniques, and to employ, as appropriate, advanced data analytics and remote auditing, with a view to leveraging technology to provide more economical and comprehensive audit coverage.	**Accepted and in progress** OIAI has identified technology as a key enabler in its strategic direction for 2017 and beyond, and is working to embed stronger information technology auditing techniques (including data analytics) into its core audit processes. The office management plan (OMP) for 2018-21 will address the associated resourcing implications.
Recommendation 6 Allocate adequate financial and human resources to the internal audit services to ensure sufficient coverage of high-risk areas and adherence to established auditing cycles, as identified by the heads of internal audit/ oversight during risk-based audit planning.	**Accepted and in progress** The Audit Advisory Committee and OIAI together provide advice to the Executive Director on the adequacy of financial and human resources allocated to internal audit, and also comment on this annually to the Executive Board. OIAI periodically reassesses its resource requirements, and is currently doing so during the OMP process for the strategic plan period 2018-21, taking into account the requirements of its charter, the OMP objectives, the evolving assurance needs of UNICEF and opportunities identified for enhancing audit efficiency.

Safety and security in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2016/9)

1. Recommendations addressed to the Executive Board legislative body

No recommendation addressed to UNICEF

2. Recommendations addressed to the executive head

Recommendation 1 Ensure that, by no later than April 2018: • Existing host country agreements within their respective organizations reflect the current security threats and contain commensurate security measures necessary to protect United Nations system organizations' personnel and premises • Future host country agreements contain a security annex reflecting the main responsibility of the host country with respect to the security of United Nations system organizations' personnel and premises • Existing and future host country agreements are regularly reviewed to reflect and adapt to changes in the respective security environments	**Under consideration of the Chief Executives Board** This recommendation would require consideration by the CEB, through the High-level Committee on Management, as to how to implement such an overarching proposal. That said, the report of the Independent Panel on the Safety and Security of United Nations Personnel in Iraq made a similar recommendation that was subsequently addressed by the Inter-Agency Security Management Network (IASMN) and the Department of Safety and Security. After extensive consultations with resident coordinators and Member States, it was determined that a supplemental host government agreement was neither realistic nor acceptable to Member States. Therefore, the recommendation of the report of the Independent Panel was closed by IASMN in 2011. Consequently, it does not seem feasible to take this recommendation forward.

Relevant recommendations	*Remarks*
Recommendation 2 Ensure that, by no later than January 2018, a comprehensive system-wide policy for road safety is finalized and ready for implementation within each of their respective organizations.	**Accepted and in progress** UNICEF has implemented the strategy and is currently reviewing its driver training capability. UNICEF has launched a training programme in a number of countries, with the potential of a global roll-out. Moreover, a road safety policy has been in place since October 2011, and a road safety strategy is currently being addressed by an IASMN working group, chaired by the Department of Safety and Security.
Recommendation 3 Ensure that, by no later than January 2018, appropriate security compliance mechanisms commensurate with the risk level assessed in each particular duty station are included in the individual performance appraisal systems in place for all staff within their respective organizations.	**Accepted and in progress** UNICEF will ensure compliance through internal monitoring and evaluation processes.
Recommendation 5 By no later than January 2018, incorporate safety and security compliance indicators in the performance assessments at every management level, including senior management.	**Accepted and in progress** UNICEF acknowledges that all personnel with supervisory responsibilities should have a mandatory result related to safety and security within their respective performance assessment. UNICEF will undertake a review of its performance management process with a view to incorporating security within the organization's performance assessment process.
Knowledge management in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2016/10)	
1. Recommendations addressed to the Executive Board/legislative body	
No recommendations addressed to UNICEF	
2. Recommendations addressed to the executive head	
Recommendation 1 Develop knowledge management strategies and policies aligned with the mandate, goals and objectives of their respective organizations, by the end of 2018. Such strategies should be based on an assessment of current and future knowledge management needs and include measures for implementation.	**Accepted and in progress** UNICEF is currently considering how best to develop a knowledge management strategy, building on the existing work in research, evaluation and knowledge exchange and enterprise content management.
Recommendation 3 Take incremental measures aimed at embedding knowledge management skills and knowledge-sharing abilities in their respective staff performance appraisal systems, annual work plans, job descriptions and organizational core competences, by the end of 2020.	**Accepted and in progress** This recommendation is already partially incorporated into UNICEF competency frameworks and selected job descriptions.

Relevant recommendations	*Remarks*
Recommendation 4	**Accepted and in progress**
Establish norms and procedures for the retention and transfer of knowledge from retiring, moving or departing staff, as part of the organizations' succession planning processes.	UNICEF has already undertaken some small-scale experiments, but more extensive piloting and testing is needed to find the most effective and cost-efficient approach.

Administrative support services: the role of service centres in redesigning administrative service delivery (JIU/REP/2016/11)

1. Recommendations addressed to the Executive Board/legislative body

Recommendation 4	**Accepted and implemented**
Request technical advisory bodies to examine the results, including benefits realized, of administrative service reform when considering relevant organizational budget proposals, starting with the next budget cycle.	Following a preliminary presentation by UNICEF in 2016, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions will receive information on the progress of the Global Shared Services Centre, including a cost and benefit analysis, in the context of the submission of the UNICEF integrated budget, 2018-2021.
Recommendation 5	**Accepted and in progress**
The General Assembly should, consequent to the current review by the International Civil Service Commission of all categories of staff, take action, if possible at its seventy-second session, to address the needs of organizations for locally recruited professional expertise for functions not limited to national content.	UNICEF fully supports the re-evaluation of current criteria for the recruitment of local staff at the professional level to fulfil operational needs.

2. Recommendations addressed to the executive head

Recommendation 1	**Accepted and implemented**
Global service centres should define and provide the tools and systems required to support efficient tracking of customer service and the capturing of business intelligence for performance measurement and further improvement and comparison with benchmarks.	UNICEF has already implemented tools to track service-level performance against service-level agreement targets.
Recommendation 2	**Accepted and in progress**
Global service centres should define efficiency benchmarks based on objective standards and ensure that performance targets are progressively adjusted to attain them.	UNICEF conducts periodic benchmark comparisons with peer groups from the public and private sectors.
Recommendation 3	**Accepted and implemented**
The executive heads should within a year designate responsibility for pursuing ongoing improvement and for making process changes and ensure that service centre governance and management arrangements make clear the related role of service centre managers.	UNICEF has implemented a framework and culture of continuous business improvement within its Global Shared Services Centre in regular consultation with business policy owners.

Annex II

Summary of the status of all open Joint Inspection Unit recommendations addressed to UNICEF prior to 2016

JIU report symbol	*Recommendation (number) and text*	*Addressee*	*Current status*
JIU/REP/2008/6 Management of Internet websites	(8) Executive heads should report on the implementation of the recommendations addressed to the executive heads, in particular those aimed at reforming website governance, updating website strategy and policy, and implementing multilingualism	Legislative body	Accepted and in progress
JIU/REP/2010/8 Inter-agency staff mobility	(10) Systematically assess the performance of work/life balance programmes periodically and include, inter alia, a cost-benefit analysis of such programmes as part of their regular performance reporting.	Executive heads	Accepted and in progress
JIU/NOTE/2011/1 Procurement reforms	(9) Review the social aspect of their procurement policy and practices with a view to ensuring that their policy includes all important social elements, and that guidelines are provided for effective implementation.	Executive heads	Accepted and in progress
JIU/REP/2011/1 Medical service	(2) Adopt appropriate standards with regard to Occupational Safety and Health issues, taking into account and ensuring compatibility with emerging modifications to the Minimum Operating Safety and Security Standards.	Legislative body	Accepted and in progress
JIU/REP/2011/6 Business continuity	(8) Ensure that business continuity training be incorporated in the career and staff development courses, including induction training, and that periodic training be provided to critical staff in the organizations as an integral component of business continuity management.	Executive heads	Accepted and in progress
JIU/REP/2012/2 Sick leave	(4) Design and implement an absence management module, in particular absence due to sick leave, for staff with supervisory or managerial responsibilities.	Executive heads	Accepted and in progress
JIU/REP/2012/12 Strategic planning	(4) Formulate and define relevant system-wide sectoral strategic frameworks through the Economic and Social Council to address the long-term goals established by the 2005 World Summit Outcome, adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 60/1, as well as those established by the missions and mandates of the system organizations as a result of global conferences.	Legislative body	Accepted and in progress

JIU report symbol	*Recommendation (number) and text*	*Addressee*	*Current status*
JIU/REP/2013/2 Records and archives management	(1) Review respective regulatory frameworks governing records and archives management (RAM) and recast them into a comprehensive and unequivocal set of principles, practice-oriented procedures and rules to keep pace with changes in the record-keeping environment and technology, and cover the whole life cycle of recorded information. Ensure strict compliance with those principles, procedures and rules for any materials identified as records of the organization or entity.	Executive heads	Accepted and in progress
	(2) Ensure that all departments, offices and other entities under their responsibility have developed and apply the basic components of records management programmes to all records for which they have managerial responsibility.	Executive heads	Accepted and in progress
	(3) Ensure that appropriate time and resources are allocated to institutionalizing tailored RAM training programmes delivered by experienced RAM experts, both at headquarters and in the field, to (a) senior and middle-level managers; (b) records coordinators and other staff involved in RAM activities; and (c) staff at large.	Executive heads	Accepted and in progress
	(4) Ensure that information systems that capture, create or manage e-records meet international standards for record keeping and the preservation of digital records and archives.	Executive heads	Accepted and in progress
JIU/REP/2013/4 Management of implementing partners	(8) Institute, for staff engaged with Implementing Partners (and especially staff in country offices), training in fraud awareness and prevention, with emphasis on fraud related to third parties.	Executive heads	Accepted and in progress
	(10) Review the capabilities of their existing automation systems, such as ERPs and other database tracking systems, with the aim of supporting the management of Implementing Partners and consolidating related data in these systems. This action should be based on a cost/benefit analysis, taking into account the level of need for such data.	Executive heads	Accepted and in progress
JIU/NOTE/2014/1 Use of retirees	(2) Set up effective mechanisms to capitalize on the knowledge and experience of staff due to retire and of retirees when rehired through coaching and mentoring programmes, in line with good practices identified.	Executive heads	Accepted and in progress

JIU report symbol	*Recommendation (number) and text*	*Addressee*	*Current status*
	(4) Organizations should: (a) take immediate action to limit such cases to exceptions which are fully justified and regularly monitored and reported to legislative bodies; and (b) ensure that their employment in senior executive and general service positions is restricted to instances where needs cannot be met by current staff, and that they are rehired as consultants, when applicable, with due regard to the specific needs of organizations.	Executive heads	Accepted and in progress
JIU/REP/2014/1 Resource mobilization function	(5) Organize dialogues with their respective donors to agree upon common reporting requirements which would simplify the reporting process for the respective organizations and satisfy the information needs of the donors with a view to reducing the reporting burden and associated costs.	Executive heads	Accepted and in progress
JIU/REP/2014/4 Post-Rio+20 review of environmental governance within the United Nations system	(12) Organizations involved in country activities in the UNDAF should: (a) Adopt outreach and training policy; support the establishment of capacity-building in the United Nations country team; and disseminate the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) guidance notes on mainstreaming environmental sustainability and the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development into the UNDAF process; and (b) Support the operationalization of the above-mentioned policy and the attendant expertise within the framework of the United Nations country team with the effective participation and contribution of specialists and experts of the United Nations Environment Programme and multilateral environmental agreements, when feasible, as well as with the active use of sector experts of specialized agencies, funds and programmes, who have environmental knowledge and expertise working under the guidance of the Resident Coordinator.	Executive heads	Accepted and in progress
JIU/REP/2014/8 Non-staff personnel	(12) Ensure and formalize the access of non-staff personnel (including United Nations Volunteers) to mediation, the ethics office, the office of the ombudsman and other informal conflict-resolution mechanisms, and ensure that such personnel have recourse to the policies on the prevention of harassment and whistle-blowing. Furthermore, non-staff should be informed of those rights.	Executive heads	Accepted and in progress

JIU report symbol	*Recommendation (number) and text*	*Addressee*	*Current status*
JIU/REP/2014/9 Contract management	(2) Incorporate in their annual statements of internal controls certifications, by individuals with procurement and contracts management authority that the execution of contracts has been in full compliance with the organization's policies, procedures and rules.	Executive heads	Accepted and in progress
JIU/REP/2015/5 Climate change	(2) Support and endorse the participation of their respective organizations involved in cross-cutting areas directly or indirectly related to climate change in a system-wide United Nations strategy to combat climate change, in a manner consistent with the outcome of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 21).	Legislative body	Accepted and in progress
	(1) Present to the governing bodies of their organizations a long-term United Nations system-wide climate change strategy responsive to the outcome of COP 21, and request its endorsement and the support necessary for its effective implementation, in order to achieve measurable interim results by 2020.	Executive heads	Accepted and in progress
	(3) Organizations involved in areas with clear cross-linkages with climate change should elaborate and agree upon a common methodology to establish criteria to ensure the traceability of specific funding for climate change adaptation and mitigation, seeking consistency and coherence in the context of the climate change regime methodologies.	Executive heads	Accepted and in progress
	(4) Promote the development of a common information-sharing system for the measurement and monitoring of the United Nations system activities and resources aimed at addressing climate change, by sector and type of funding, so as to ensure the most cost-efficient and effective delivery of activities to tackle climate change.	Executive heads	Accepted and in progress
	(6) Ensure that their organizations follow the UNDG guidance on integrating climate change in the UNDAF and build on existing good practices of engagement with the relevant United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change bodies, for climate change assistance at the country and	Executive heads	Accepted and in progress

JIU report symbol	*Recommendation (number) and text*	*Addressee*	*Current status*
	regional level, in close cooperation with the resident coordinators, to enhance and strengthen capacity-building assistance to developing countries through common country assessment/UNDAFs.		
JIU/REP/2015/6 Ombudsman services	(5) Make it possible for the ombudsman to report to them on systemic issues identified on a regular basis.	Legislative body	Under consideration The JIU report and the present report are presented to the Executive Board for consideration of this recommendation.
	(1) Review, update and disseminate across respective organizations the terms of reference of the ombudsman, giving due consideration to the direction provided by the present report and using a staff-management consultation mechanism.	Executive heads	Accepted and in progress
	(2) Include questions relating to the ombudsman service in staff surveys and responses should be used by management, staff associations and the ombudsman office to increase staff awareness and promote a better understanding of the ombudsman function in the organization.	Executive heads	Accepted and in progress
	(4) Include in the work programme the development of a case management manual and to seek the cooperation of other United Nations system ombudsmen with a view to achieving a certain level of harmonization across the system.	Executive heads	Accepted and in progress
	(7) Establish an accountability and appraisal system for the ombudsman services and include the relevant provisions in the ombudsman's terms of reference. The system and the provisions should reflect the specific requirements of the ombudsman function by making accountability and the appraisal process inclusive and participatory for all stakeholders.	Executive heads	Accepted and in progress

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Annual report on the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2014-2017

Summary

The present document, prepared in accordance with Executive Board decision 2014/8, provides the third annual update on the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan (GAP), 2014-2017. The report includes an update on progress on GAP priorities, indicators and performance benchmarks.

* E/ICEF/2017/5.

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I. Introduction

1. The UNICEF Gender Action Plan (GAP), 2014-2017 specifies how UNICEF will promote gender equality across the organization's work, in alignment with the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017. The first year of the GAP focused on building a foundation and the second on expanding gender expertise and strengthening programmes. This third annual review comes at a time when UNICEF is shaping its next strategic plan. As such, it reflects on progress made, reviews lessons learned and charts the direction for the GAP, 2018-2021.[1]

2. This report highlights trends and progress from the 2013 baseline year, mapping against the GAP results matrix to the extent possible, and through the patterns drawn from the rich information in global, regional and country office annual reports. In a three-year time frame, 2014 to 2016, institutional investments made by UNICEF through increased resources, leadership, accountability, as well as strengthened gender expertise and partnerships, have begun to yield demonstrable progress on gender results.

3. Areas such as maternal health and nutrition show improved gender outcomes. The number of countries with budgeted maternal and child health plans, and antenatal care and skilled birth attendance coverage above 80 per cent has increased significantly in the past three years. In an increasing number of countries, adolescent girls are benefiting from better maternal care and nutrition. Progress has also been made on child marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). Eleven countries now have national action plans on child marriage, compared with only one country in 2013, and two countries in the UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund)-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting show a decline of 10 per cent or more in girls aged 0-14 undergoing FGM/C since 2008. Indicators on other adolescent girl-related areas — secondary education, HIV/AIDS and menstrual hygiene management (MHM) — show slower progress, but programming is improving and progressing in several countries, despite resource and policy constraints.

4. In 2016, country-level nuances in gender results and implementation become more visible and the effort to programme at scale more evident. Increasingly, UNICEF-supported programmes are engaging in gender-responsive interventions to reach large numbers of women and girls. This is demonstrated through additional country-level interventions in support of partnerships with Governments, engagement with national and subnational systems, development of budgeted plans, and investment in gender-responsive training, curricula and service infrastructure. Even on issues where overall progress on GAP indicators is lagging, there has been an increase in gender programming. However, sustained efforts are required to make a marked difference on many gender outcome indicators.

5. The 2016 results demonstrate that the GAP provided a framework for UNICEF to respond to the gender dimensions of the multiple humanitarian crises that occurred. Expanded efforts helped UNICEF to address gender-based violence in emergencies for four times as many women and children as compared to two years ago. The nature of emergencies such as the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe and the Zika virus required new models of gender-responsive programming.

6. Specifying indicators to measure the full range of GAP progress remains a challenge. For formalized global programmes, such as UNICEF work on maternal

[1] This annual report is complemented by the Data companion and scorecard to annual report of the Executive Director, 2016, which provides a comprehensive list of gender indicators based on the GAP results matrix.

and child health, or child marriage, efforts can be made to capture annual progress indicators, such as budgeted national action plans or the number of beneficiaries reached. However, adequate data are harder to find for areas such as MHM, and learning levels for girls versus boys, where data-collection efforts require significant improvement. It is also important to consider alternative options for assessing the effectiveness of gender programming in real time, since data on evaluations often involve a significant time lag. As UNICEF transitions to the GAP, 2018-2021, there will be an opportunity to reconsider areas for measuring progress and to establish a process to assess the impact of the GAP approach within a six-to-eight-year time frame.

II. Programmatic results

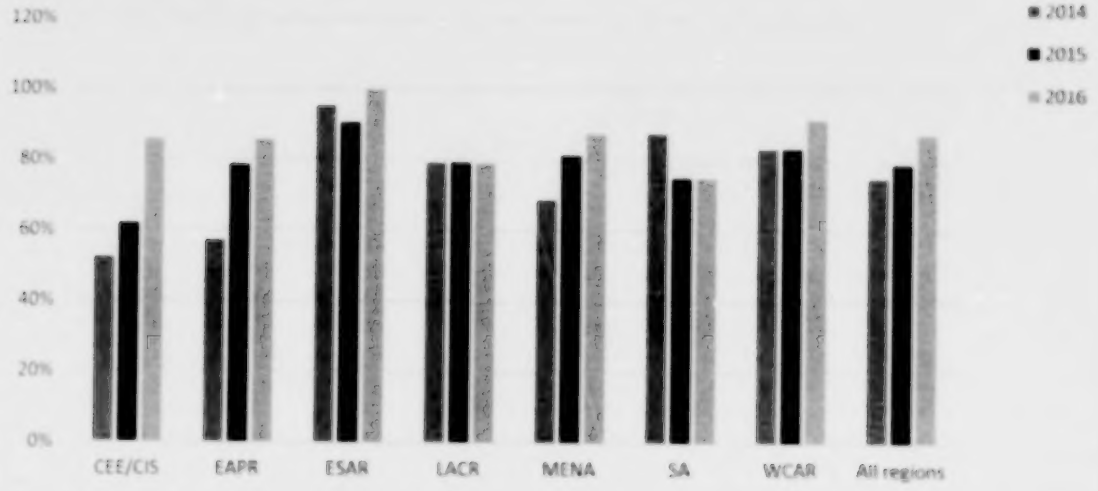
7. The GAP advances gender equality by focusing on targeted cross-sectoral priorities that have a primary focus on adolescents — particularly girls — as well as by mainstreaming gender across the seven UNICEF Strategic Plan outcome areas. The four cross-sectoral targeted priorities outlined in the GAP are: (a) promoting gender-responsive adolescent health; (b) advancing girls' secondary education; (c) ending child marriage; and (d) addressing gender-based violence in emergencies. The GAP also aims to achieve gender-mainstreaming results specific to the Strategic Plan outcome areas by focusing on key results with a strong gender dimension, for example, gender equality in reducing child mortality; quality maternal care and nutrition; gender equality in education; protecting and supporting boys and girls at-risk of violence; access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) by women and girls in humanitarian and non-humanitarian contexts; and gender-responsive policies, legislation and social protection.

A. Targeted gender priorities

8. Targeted gender priorities aim for transformative shifts in gender equality by focusing on adolescence as a life stage during which girls, in particular, can be supported so that they build and retain lifelong options and opportunities. Over the past three years, there has been rapid progress in two of the four priorities: child marriage, and gender-based violence in emergencies. Several aspects of gender-responsive adolescent health — nutrition, pregnancy prevention and maternal care, and ending FGM/C — have also shown substantial improvements. Progress has been slower on girls' secondary education and adolescent-related HIV/AIDS, "second-generation" issues that require increased financing and innovative solutions for reaching hard-to-reach or marginalized adolescent girls. As an emerging issue, MHM is gaining traction, but requires expanded on-the-ground programming.

9. Figure 1 shows that targeted gender priorities have become core to UNICEF work on gender, aligning with key regional concerns. In 2016, 88 per cent of UNICEF-supported country programmes included planned results in one or more of the four targeted gender priorities, a 13 per cent increase from 2014.

Figure 1: Percentage of countries that include results on one or more major targeted gender priorities (by region)



Key: CEE/CIS: Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (region); EAPR: East Asia and the Pacific region; ESAR: Eastern and Southern Africa region; LACR: Latin America and Caribbean region; MENA: Middle East and North Africa (region); SA: South Asia (region); WCAR: West and Central Africa region.

Ending child marriage

10. UNICEF, in partnership with UNFPA, national Governments and civil society organizations, has contributed to focusing attention and resources, and accelerating measurement, programming and results in preventing and addressing child marriage over the past three years. These efforts are beginning to show progressive results at the national and global levels, especially in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.3.1, "Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18." As the custodian for this indicator, UNICEF is tracking the levels of child marriage across 120 countries.

11. In 2016, 60 UNICEF-supported country programmes focused on child marriage as a targeted priority, compared to 52 in 2015 and 44 in 2014. In support of multiple Governments and in partnership with civil society, in 2016, UNICEF and UNFPA launched the Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage. The programme focuses on 12 countries with a high to medium prevalence and burden of child marriage.[2] It supports national and local efforts to scale-up multisectoral interventions to address child marriage, including advancement of national strategies, costed national plans, improved schooling and health options for girls, life skills training, community mobilization and the generation of quality data and evidence.

12. Collaborative efforts by UNICEF, UNFPA, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and national partners have resulted in seven of the global programme countries developing

[2] The Global Programme countries include: Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Yemen and Zambia.

national strategies or plans on child marriage, with three countries — Burkina Faso, Mozambique and Uganda — having costed the plans. In 2016, Uganda budgeted its plan and began implementation in key districts. In Mozambique, the programme supported the development of the National Strategy for School Health and for Adolescents and Youth (2016-2020). By end-2016, 11 UNICEF-supported countries had budgeted national strategies or plans on child marriage (compared to 5 in 2015), thus exceeding the 2017 target of 10 countries.

13. In 2016, more than 1 million girls were reached by the global programme with one or more services related to skills, information, schooling, or health. Some 420,000 girls received life skills training and 210,000 adolescent girls received educational support through interventions including school materials, bursary support, coverage of transportation expenses and cash transfers. The programme also helped to strengthen national systems to deliver services to girls at risk of marriage, or already married. More than 7,500 schools were supported to improve the quality of education for adolescent girls through improvements in physical infrastructure, WASH, MHM, teacher training, gender-responsive curricula and textbook reform. In Burkina Faso, 43,000 primary schoolteachers received training on using a quality child-friendly schools approach with a gender component.

14. The global programme reached 1.7 million people through community-based behavioural change and sensitization activities, including community dialogue, media and interactive folk theatre, as well as partnerships and advocacy with faith-based organizations and traditional leaders. In Mali, UNICEF supported social mobilization on child marriage, reaching almost 420,000 community members. Many countries that are not part of the global programme are also implementing similar interventions. In Indonesia, UNICEF worked through an inter-ministerial partnership to develop training for local leaders to improve knowledge, attitudes and practices of communities towards girls so that they can make informed marriage decisions.

15. UNICEF supported the development of the forthcoming African Union report on the status of child marriage, contributing recommendations for the next phase of the Campaign for Ending Child Marriage. UNICEF also contributed to General Assembly resolution 71/175, which articulates a shared global understanding of child marriage, commitments on what must be done and the support required for affected girls.

Advancing girls' secondary education

16. Globally, there has been progress in increasing lower secondary school enrolment among girls, with the percentage of countries in which girls are disadvantaged versus boys falling from 41 per cent in 2014 to 36 per cent in 2016. UNICEF is working with Governments and partners to increase the number of marginalized girls completing secondary education, improve their learning and reduce the number of adolescent girls out of school. To accomplish this, UNICEF emphasizes multisectoral strategies at the systems and community levels to increase affordability and access for girls, create gender-responsive schools, build community engagement, and improve education quality for girls and boys.

17. In 2016, 60 UNICEF country offices implemented actions to advance girls' secondary education. Fourteen offices[3] are part of a coordinated effort to systematically assess, document and implement specific strategies and results to advance girls' secondary education, and to work with initiatives to reduce child marriage and adolescent pregnancy.

[3] Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Pakistan, Peru, Tajikistan and Uganda.

and reproductive health among 48,000 girls. In China, UNICEF worked with young people to support a national youth safe sex campaign, including a youth-driven survey that generated more than 30,000 responses, as well as community-outreach activities to discuss safe sex and self-protection that covered 50,000 adolescents.

Gender-based violence in emergencies

29. The scale and visibility of major humanitarian crises has brought unprecedented attention to gender-based violence in emergencies. In 2016, UNICEF provided approximately 4 million women, girls and boys in humanitarian situations across 53 countries with a package of risk mitigation, prevention and response services to address gender-based violence. This more than doubles the number reported in 2015, itself a doubling of the 2014 number.

30. The UNICEF approach to addressing gender-based violence in emergencies includes mitigating risk by equipping latrines and bathing facilities with locks and lighting; and having safety patrols and codes of conduct in learning centres. In 2016, more than 3.2 million women and girls received improved hygiene and sanitation facilities in emergency settings, responding to feedback that identified substandard WASH facilities as a high-risk area for sexual violence. UNICEF WASH programmes in 20 emergency-affected contexts reached 1 million women and girls of reproductive age with MHM materials and messaging. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the WASH programme increased household delivery of services to reduce the risks of gender-based violence associated with women and children collecting water from communal water points.

31. UNICEF implemented interventions to address gender-based violence in emergencies across sectors and covered a range of safety and protection issues. In the Central African Republic, more than 9,000 female survivors of gender-based violence were provided with health and psychosocial support services. In Iraq, UNICEF-initiated case management and psychosocial support on gender-based violence reached 2,660 women and 2,000 girls. Woman- and child-friendly safe spaces also provided psychosocial support, socio-economic programming, case management, clinical management of rape services, referral services and awareness-raising activities for survivors and those at risk, reaching more than 60,000 women and girls.

32. In Turkey, UNICEF supported the prevention and mitigation of gender-based violence in emergencies by including gender equality in a parenting programme that reached more than 40,000 Syrian refugee parents and 25,000 refugee girls and boys. Psychosocial support programmes reached 167,000 Syrian refugee children. In Nigeria, UNICEF partnered with the non-governmental organization (NGO) International Alert and local NGOs to provide reintegration support for more than 2,000 women and girls who had been abducted, raped or forcibly married by Boko Haram.

33. In Myanmar, UNICEF supported the expansion of a government-led case management system to 40 townships, as well as NGO-led case management services across camps and townships for internally displaced persons, providing safe spaces for 130,000 adolescent girls and 125,000 boys in conflict-affected communities. UNICEF also supports the effective collection and harmonization of data on gender-based violence in humanitarian settings by serving on the inter-agency Steering Committee of the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System, currently operational in 14 countries.

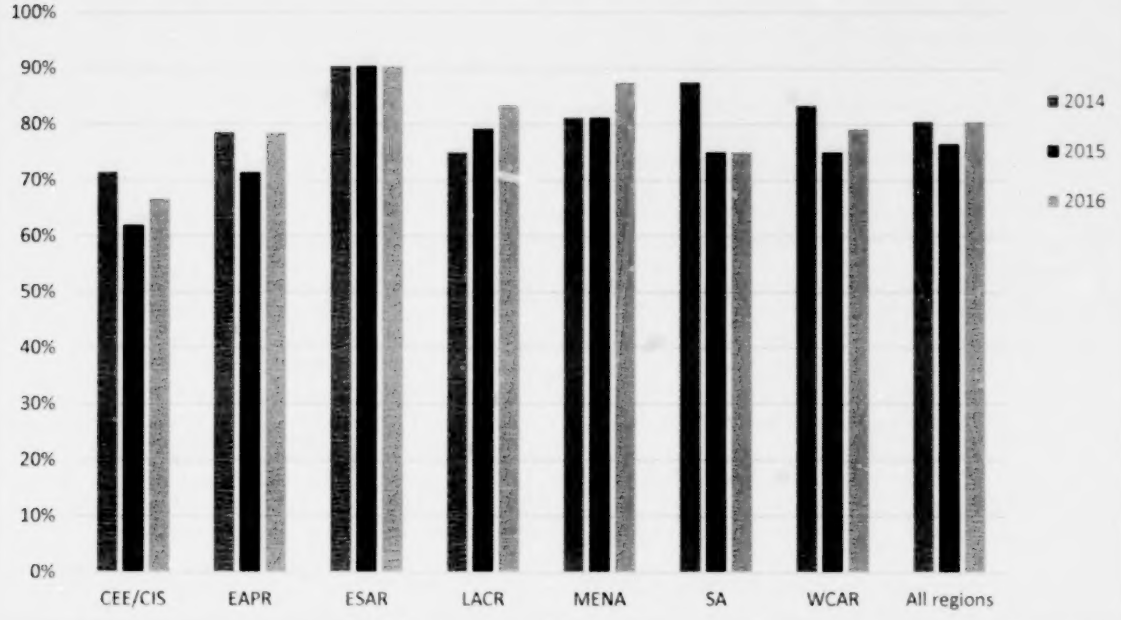
34. Overall, the work of UNICEF is demonstrating additional interlinkages across the four targeted gender priorities. An increasing number of country programmes are connecting their work on child marriage with girls' secondary education, and more countries see advancing girls' education and ending child marriage as critical means

of addressing adolescent pregnancies and anaemia. Similarly, the role of schooling or water and sanitation in preventing gender-based violence in emergencies is more evident. However, even as policies and global commitments to investing in adolescent girls have become more robust, financing for such commitments remains inadequate to reach the millions of girls at risk. Moreover, given religious, social and political conservatism in many settings, national commitments to addressing issues such as child marriage, FGM/C, delayed pregnancies, or even girls' schooling, require constant reinforcement and programming flexibility in order to achieve sustainable change.

B. Mainstreaming gender

35. Mainstreaming gender across programmes in the outcome areas of the UNICEF Strategic Plan includes addressing the critical gender issues faced by women and children, such as improving maternal health and nutrition; reducing gender differentials in child survival and care; reducing mother-to-child transmission of HIV; achieving gender equality in primary school completion and learning; reducing gender barriers to birth registration; and supporting quality childcare.

Figure 2: Percentage of countries that include one or more gender mainstreaming results (by region)



Key: CEE/CIS: Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (region); EAPR: East Asia and the Pacific region; ESAR: Eastern and Southern Africa region; LACR: Latin America and Caribbean region; MENA: Middle East and North Africa (region); SA: South Asia (region); WCAR: West and Central Africa region.

36. Figure 2 shows that in 2016, 80 per cent of UNICEF country programmes included one or more gender mainstreaming results. While high, this rate is the same as the percentage in 2014, indicating that after an initial specification of gender-mainstreaming results in the vast majority of UNICEF country programmes, the momentum for this specification to become universal has not been sustained. An

important reason is that, unlike "targeted gender priorities," which are very easily identified with gender results, there continues to be a lack of clarity among UNICEF staff as to what qualifies as a mainstreaming result. In the near term, additional guidance is being provided to country offices.

Health, nutrition and HIV/AIDS

37. UNICEF programmes reported good progress in efforts to advance gender equality in child survival and maternal and neonatal health. In 2016, the target of providing at least 80 per cent coverage of lifelong antiretroviral therapy (ART) for all pregnant women living with HIV in 10 of the 21 priority countries for the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV was exceeded, with combined coverage of 74 per cent for all 21 priority countries. Other indicators on maternal care and breastfeeding also performed well in 2016. The number of UNICEF programme countries with at least 80 per cent coverage of skilled attendance at birth continues to rise, reaching 100 countries in 2016, far surpassing the target of 60 countries. Antenatal care coverage of 80 per cent or more for pregnant women was also achieved in 53 countries, more than double the target of 25 countries. And the target of 40 countries with a 50 per cent or higher exclusive breastfeeding rate among children 0-5 months old was achieved ahead of schedule in 2016.

38. Equally important, 65 countries reported having costed implementation plans for maternal, newborn and child health care (short of the target of 70). A policy focused on antenatal care was developed, adopted and implemented by 108 countries (slightly below the target of 113). Progress was also made on maternal and neonatal tetanus (MNT), with three more countries eliminating MNT in 2016, bringing the total to 41, against the target of 54 countries by 2017.

39. In humanitarian settings, coverage to prevent mother-to-child-transmission of HIV is slowly improving. The rate increased from 54 per cent in 2013 to 62 per cent in 2016, short of the 80 per cent target for 2017. However, by June 2016, all 21 priority countries in sub-Saharan Africa in the Global Plan towards the Elimination of New HIV Infections among Children and Keeping their Mothers Alive: 2011-2015 had adopted a policy of providing lifelong ART for all pregnant women living with HIV.

40. UNICEF worked with Governments and other partners to expand the pool of female community health workers and midwives to provide maternal and child health services to women and adolescent girls in both non-humanitarian and humanitarian settings. In Pakistan, new health education modules were developed to train lady health workers across three provinces with a catchment population of 3.2 million. In Yemen, displaced community midwives were equipped so that they could continue their work during emergency conditions and provide home-based care to 47,000 pregnant and lactating women. More than 26,000 pregnant and lactating women accessed maternal services through these mobile team and 147,000 through integrated outreach services. In Lebanon, maternal and child health services were provided to all Palestinian refugee camps through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East network of primary health centres, reaching 85 per cent of all pregnant women and more than 95 per cent of lactating mothers.

41. The indicators on addressing gender discrimination in child survival show slower progress. The number of countries that analyse sex-differentiated infant and child mortality estimates has remained around 42 since 2013, short of the target of 62 by 2017. The number of UNICEF programme countries where at least 80 per cent of both boys and girls under age 5 with symptoms of pneumonia were taken to an appropriate health provider has also increased slowly, from 6 in 2013 to 8 in 2016, and is unlikely to reach the target of 20 countries by 2017. UNICEF programme countries with significant sex differentials in child mortality and care —

especially in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, and South Asia — are increasingly prioritizing programming to address gender discrimination in the care and treatment of girls versus boys aged 0-5.

42. Although there has been progress on gender reviews of nutrition policies with UNICEF support, with the number rising from 16 in 2013 to 25 in 2016, it is short of the target of 40 by 2017. At the same time, delivery of nutritional services through government mechanisms and civil society partners is meeting critical needs. For example, 130,700 pregnant and lactating women in 14 earthquake-affected districts of Nepal received IFA supplements; of these, 26,000 were identified as acutely malnourished. In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 270,000 pregnant women received IFA supplements; and 360,000 pregnant and lactating women received at least two months' supply of multi-micronutrient tablets during pregnancy and at least one month's supply during lactation.

43. UNICEF continued interventions and advocacy to support breastfeeding mothers through workplace policies, and by framing breastfeeding as a socioeconomic issue — not simply a health issue — that requires multilevel interventions. This perspective was highlighted at the Women Deliver 4th Global Conference in 2016, strengthening UNICEF partnerships on breastfeeding with organizations working on women's health and rights. In Bangladesh, Cuba, Guatemala, Maldives and Pakistan, UNICEF developed public-private partnerships to mobilize workplace support for breastfeeding. A UNICEF-supported human milk bank reached 94 per cent of children in neonatal departments in Cuba, and was complemented by training of health professionals in 111 municipalities.

44. The outbreak of the Zika virus, which has affected at least 75 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Asia, threatened the well-being of women and children while causing birth defects in newborns. In line with the World Health Organization-coordinated inter-agency Strategic Response Plan, in 2016 UNICEF supported interventions led to increased access to health services, especially for teenagers, pregnant women and women of childbearing age. A total of 31,000 pregnant women were reached with interventions to prevent Zika virus infection and nearly 162 million people were reached with preventive messages through mass, social and digital media campaigns.

Water, sanitation and hygiene

45. In 2016, UNICEF made important progress in supporting countries to improve WASH in households, schools and health facilities, efforts that have especially positive benefits for women and girls. In 123 countries, 75 per cent or more of households now have access to an improved source of drinking water, only 2 countries short of the 2017 target of 125 countries. Similarly, the number of countries where one third or more of the population practices open defecation has been reduced from 23 in 2013 to 17 in 2015, only 2 countries short of the target of 15 for 2017. Progress still needs to be made on the percentage of countries implementing national strategies to eliminate open defecation (65 per cent in 2016 against the target of 70 per cent by 2017), and even greater effort is required to increase from 103 countries in 2015, in order to achieve the targeted 120 countries where 50 per cent or more of the population has an improved sanitation facility.

46. Gender-responsive WASH facilities in schools and health centres continued to be a key priority for UNICEF. In 2016, UNICEF supported improved WASH services and programmes in 7,100 schools, bringing the total number of schools supported since 2014 to 43,000. Technical and financial support was provided to equip 1,650 health-care facilities in 73 countries with WASH facilities, and 1.3 million additional girls had access to WASH facilities in schools in 2016. In 31 countries, UNICEF

provided 1 million women and girls in emergencies with MHM materials (nearly double the planned target of 650,000 women and girls). In Iraq, 350,000 boys and girls in 482 schools benefited from rehabilitated WASH facilities in primary schools.

47. UNICEF also supported women's engagement in Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) and addressed the sanitation needs of women and girls. In Bangladesh, 2,600 women were equipped to implement and monitor community action plans for their communities to achieve open-defecation-free status. In Myanmar, 98,000 women were reached with hygiene promotion to increase good hygiene practices on CLTS, promote environmental sanitation and sustain open-defecation-free status. In Nigeria, female WASH committee members distributed almost 100,000 WASH kits, which included reusable menstrual hygiene pads, and sensitized women on use of the kits. In camps set up in Boko Haram-affected areas, 50 per cent female membership of the committees was achieved.

Education

48. UNICEF is committed to gender equality in education. The latest statistics indicate that achieving gender parity in reducing the number of out-of-school children remains a challenge, with 32 million primary-school-age girls out of school compared to 29 million boys. This is short of the target of 18 million, respectively, of girls and boys out of school by 2017. Rates of primary school completion have dipped to 91 per cent for boys and maintained at 91 per cent for girls, but gender parity has improved, with a gender parity index of 1.00 for primary completion.

49. To address these challenges, UNICEF worked on evidence-based, scalable solutions to keeping the most marginalized girls in school and learning. Globally and regionally, UNICEF continued to host the UNGEI secretariat, which focuses on evidence-building efforts on gender equality in education, especially through support to the 2016 UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report.

50. UNICEF worked with partners to strengthen gender-responsive education systems in several countries. In Pakistan, the focus was on gendered barriers to education in district education plans in 60 districts across two provinces. In Malawi, UNICEF supported government efforts to provide community-based alternate learning pathways for 40,000 adolescent girls who had never enrolled in, or had dropped out of primary school. In Afghanistan, satellite teacher training centres were supported to enrol almost 900 female students and to increase the number of female teachers in rural areas. UNICEF also supported government efforts to increase teachers' capacity to tackle gender inequities in education, for example, through the development of gender-responsive curricula in Burundi and Honduras, and through teacher training in Cameroon.

51. In humanitarian contexts with weak education systems, accelerated learning programmes help to improve access to education for out-of-school girls. In Afghanistan, UNICEF support helped to double the number of new community-based education centres, with 5,180 centres now reaching a total of 70,000 girls. Globally, UNICEF worked with partners to provide access to education services and psychosocial support for girls in humanitarian settings. In Iraq, UNICEF interventions enabled at least 335,000 girls to access education.

Child protection

52. While significant results on gender and child protection were achieved through three of the four targeted priorities (child marriage, FGM/C and gender-based violence in emergencies), UNICEF also mainstreamed gender in its child protection programming through the provision of gender-equitable legal support for girls and boys, birth registration, and protection against abuse and induction by armed forces

and support for family reunification in humanitarian settings. In 2016, UNICEF also supported the revision of child protection-related policies based on gender analyses undertaken in 42 countries, up from 33 in 2013, although short of the target of 70 countries by 2017.

53. In Papua New Guinea, UNICEF supported law enforcement officials to provide child-friendly and gender-sensitive services to children in contact with the law. In Cambodia, the focus was on remedial education to facilitate the reintegration of 9,400 girls and boys (46 per cent females) vulnerable to violence, exploitation, trafficking and substance abuse through targeted life skills, vocational training, career advice and business development skills.

54. In Indonesia, UNICEF worked with the Government to make birth registration more accessible, particularly for unmarried mothers, contributing to birth registration rates increasing from 68 per cent to 79 per cent. UNICEF, with partners, provided Palestinian refugee women with services such as family counselling, legal advice and documentation support for marriages and births.

Social inclusion

55. Gender-responsive social inclusion efforts include support for non-gender-discriminatory legislation, accountability and normative frameworks within countries, including ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the revision of domestic legislation in line with its concluding observations. While there has been progress on the number of countries having ratified that Convention (189 in 2016, against the target of 193 in 2017), the number of countries with national legislation and policies aligned with the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has risen slowly, from 55 in 2013 to 77 in 2016, short of the target of 110 by 2017.

56. UNICEF supported the development and expansion of cash transfer programmes in more than 70 countries. In 2016, UNICEF, in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and Save the Children, published the findings of a series of impact evaluations in eight African countries that demonstrated the importance of ongoing cash transfer programmes for women. Such programmes often transfer the cash to women in the household, contributing to greater investments for children and the diversification of household economic activities. Evaluation results in Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe show important benefits for girls, especially in the form of delayed sexual debut and pregnancies, generally by helping girls to stay in school and reducing the need to engage in transactional sex to pay for their daily needs. In Kenya, the programme resulted in an 8 per cent reduction in sexual debut, and a 5 per cent reduction in adolescent pregnancy since 2004, while in South Africa it led to an 11 per cent reduction in sexual debut as well as reduced numbers of sexual partners and adolescent pregnancies since 2010.

57. These findings can inform policy dialogue and spur action on other gender-responsive social protection initiatives, linking women receiving cash to low-interest microcredit and associated vocational training. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, UNICEF supported nearly 20,000 women to gain access to microfinance.

III. Institutional strengthening

58. The GAP specifies five benchmarks against which improvements in institutional capacity and systems to support gender-equality results are being tracked: (a) Programme expenditures on gender results; (b) Gender staffing and capacity across the organization; (c) Gender performance of country programme management plans (CPMPs); (d) Gender performance on evaluations of UNICEF programmes; and (e) Effective knowledge-sharing and communications for promoting gender equality. Partnerships is another critical dimension for realizing programmatic results. Continued efforts to strengthen systems and capacity in the third year of GAP implementation have moved most of the benchmarks in a positive direction, even as continuing these efforts over the longer term is essential to reach the desired targets and to sustain organizational momentum.

A. Programme expenditure on gender results

59. In line with the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN SWAP), UNICEF has set a benchmark of ensuring that 15 per cent of programme expenditure is spent on advancing gender equality by 2017. This applies to programme expenditure supported by both regular resources and other resources, and includes development and humanitarian programmes. Expenditure focused specifically on advancing gender equality rose from 8.2 per cent in 2013 to 9 per cent in 2016. The steady rise in the share of expenditure on programming that advances gender equality is a positive sign. However, the rate of increase is slower than desired for reaching the 15 per cent target by 2017, and preliminary analysis suggests that while programmatic shifts are indeed taking place, the current expenditure coding system may not be well suited to capturing these shifts and its revision will need to be a priority over the next four years.

60. The financial benchmark sets an exceptionally high standard for programme expenditure to qualify as "advancing gender equality," since both outputs and activities must be gender-relevant or transformative. Like most other United Nations agencies, UNICEF also tracks expenditure through a gender marker. Since 2014, 61 per cent to 64 per cent of programme expenditure has contributed significantly or principally to gender equality.

B. Gender staffing and capacity

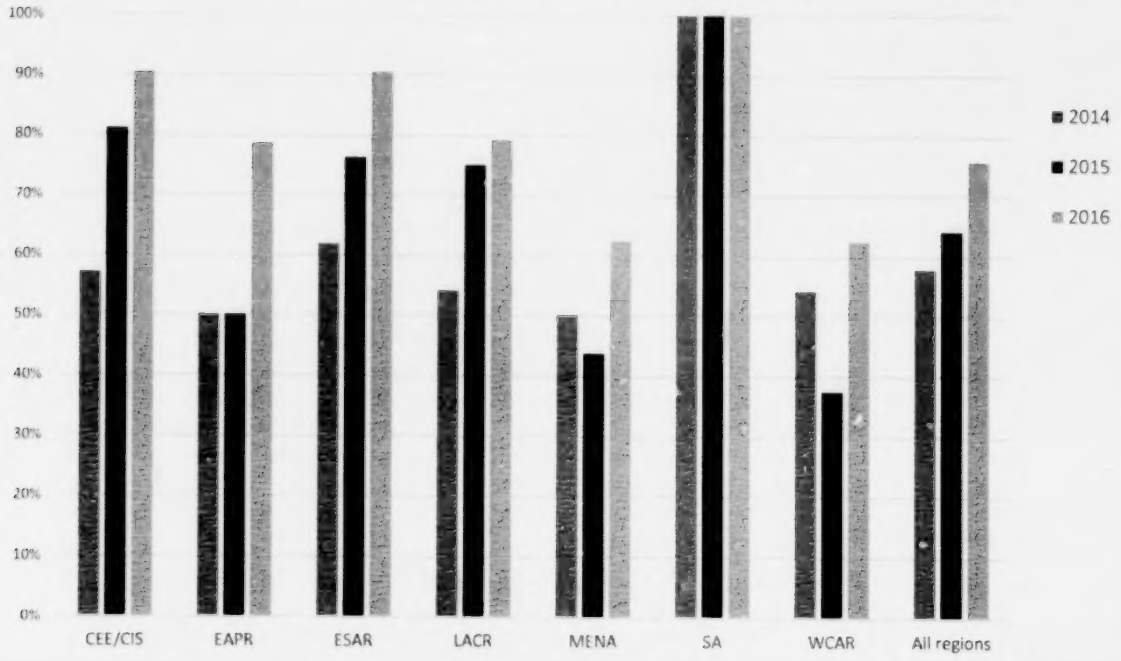
61. Gender staffing and capacity are at the heart of strengthening the ability of UNICEF to deliver on gender results, and thus continued to be an important area of focus in 2016. While the recruitment of regional advisers had progressed through 2014 and 2015, 2016 was the first year that all seven were functioning in their posts. While much remains to be done, the strengthening of gender capacity at headquarters and in the regional offices has been a catalyst for the increased focus on gender in UNICEF programming overall. Gender expertise at the country level was bolstered, with the number of dedicated gender specialists increasing from 7 in 2015 to 14 in 2016, and plans were under way for recruitment in 13 additional offices. While this indicates good progress, it suggests that the target of 50 country office gender specialists by 2017 was overly ambitious. There has also been progress at the country level in hiring sectoral gender specialists, with a total of 16 in 2016 compared to 12 in 2015, and gender focal points have now been formalized in 76 country offices.

62. There have been gender parity gains at the senior level, with 48 per cent of all positions at the P-5 level or above held by women in 2016, an increase from 46 per cent in 2015. Women represented 43 per cent of senior staff appointments at the D-2 and D-1 levels in 2016, a 2 percentage point increase from 2015. While talent and excellence remain the overarching criteria for staff selection within UNICEF, recruiting offices and divisions were requested to first assess how the selected candidate would affect the gender balance within the team, with the aim of achieving an equal ratio of women to men.

C. Gender performance of country programme management plans

63. In 2016, country offices made significant progress in incorporating gender results in their management plans. Seventy-six per cent of CPMPs now outline specific country office accountabilities on gender results and implementation of the GAP, an increase of nearly 18 percentage points since 2014, and on average, all regions have reported a positive trend (see figure 3). Quality assurance and technical support by the regional gender advisers helped to improve gender results and accountabilities at the country level, along with the systematic roll-out of a programmatic gender review tool to support country offices to undertake robust gender reviews in conjunction with their country programme development processes. Several of the remaining countries have incorporated gender results and accountabilities into their annual workplans and will update their CPMPs in their upcoming country programme cycles.

Figure 3: Percentage of country programme management plans specifying accountability for GAP results (by region)



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D. Gender performance on evaluations of UNICEF programmes

64. According to the UNICEF Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System, the percentage of evaluations rated "outstanding" (representing good practice) and "highly satisfactory" in incorporating gender went from 52 per cent in 2013 and 51 per cent in 2014 to 33 per cent in 2015. This shadows a more general fluctuation in the overall quality of evaluations reports, which dropped from 74 per cent rated highly satisfactory or outstanding in 2014 to 53 per cent in 2015. Preliminary figures for evaluation reports submitted in 2016 indicate that around 77 per cent are rated as highly satisfactory or outstanding. UNICEF performance on evaluation against UN SWAP indicators showed an improvement in 2015, rising from a rating of 6 in 2014 to 6.36 ("approaching requirements") in 2015. This brings UNICEF into line with other major United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and UN-Women. Concurrently, a capacity-building guidance and training programme for strengthening gender-responsive evaluations is planned for UNICEF staff during 2017.

E. Knowledge-sharing, communication and partnerships

65. UNICEF has increased knowledge-sharing on its gender programming. An important achievement in 2016 was the development and roll-out of tools around accountability for GAP results, including monitoring tools such as the Gender Dashboard and Gender Tags for the Results Assessment Module indicators in the inSight performance management system. A package of standards and guidance on gender staffing and focal points was shared with all business units through senior management.

66. UNICEF is steadily building an internal community of experts and practice, with a strong core team of senior gender staff at headquarters and in the regional offices serving as a support and knowledge-exchange mechanism. The second Global Gender Network Meeting, convened in June 2016, led to the establishment of a broader network of gender specialists and focal points at UNICEF, with strong linkages and collaborative mechanisms to sectoral staff.

67. Gender issues were highlighted across all of the organization's public advocacy campaigns. In 2016, the themes of gender innovation and data, especially as relates to adolescent girls, were a special focus for advocacy efforts. During the International Day of the Girl in October, UNICEF launched a publication entitled Harnessing the Power of Data for Girls: Taking stock and looking ahead to 2030. It features an assessment of the gaps in data needed to measure progress for girls under the Sustainable Development Goals and showcases new data on girls' unequal burden of household chores, especially in adolescence. Several major media outlets reviewed the publication and the associated Twitter hashtag #DayoftheGirl, which relates to the overall commemoration, was mentioned 322,000 times during the week of the Day of the Girl (6-12 October 2016), and since then has reached up to 4 billion people and engaged 2.3 million people.

68. UNICEF co-sponsored the 2016 Women Deliver conference, which focused on how to implement the Sustainable Development Goals so that they matter most for girls and women. UNICEF was represented at the sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, with a focus on priority issues including child marriage, gender-based violence, empowering girls through education, and the role of gender in peacebuilding. The UNICEF Deputy Executive Director (Management) participated in an UN-Women-hosted event on the International Day for the

Elimination of Violence against Women, and drew attention to the gaps in funding to meet the Sustainable Development Goal targets on eliminating child marriage and FGM/C. Collaboration on gender with sister agencies is also furthered through mechanisms such as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, United Nations Development Group Task Team on Gender Equality, submission of annual reports on UN SWAP, and hosting of the UNGEI secretariat by UNICEF.

IV. Lessons learned and the way forward

69. The UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2014-2017 has enabled UNICEF to make tangible contributions towards the achievement of the gender-equitable results defined in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017. The results reported for the past three years demonstrate that the GAP approach of a strong focus on prioritized programmatic results, backed by key institutional investments, can yield demonstrable progress — even within a short time frame. There has been a steady increase in the number of country offices prioritizing gender results, both in their management plans and in their programming, through the specification of targeted gender priorities and a focus on gender mainstreaming. Even as the specification of mainstreaming results remains a challenge, country programme strategies are increasingly robust in working with national systems, local communities and girls and boys — especially adolescents — and in reaching more women and girls. And while much more work is required on a number of evolving and second-generation issues, such as MHM or girls' secondary education, there is evidence of systemic changes in national policy frameworks to align with global commitments in areas such as maternal health, nutrition and child marriage.

70. Important elements of this success have been marked visibility for gender in the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017 and management commitment to provide resources, leadership, increased accountability and strengthened gender expertise. Continued commitment and support from government and civil society partners, enhanced gender capacity at the regional and country levels and a strong knowledge-sharing mechanism are beginning to contribute to demonstrable programmatic results. These results indicate that the organization is moving in the right direction, while remaining mindful of existing challenges in data, measurement and tracking of gender expenditure.

71. Deepening these efforts is a longer-term process, and UNICEF is committed to a second phase of the GAP, which will be developed in conjunction with its Strategic Plan, 2018-2021. The next phase of the GAP will be informed by a 2016 internal review that identified key successes, lessons learned and contributing/inhibiting factors for implementation of the current GAP; and an ongoing external literature review commissioned by the UNICEF Evaluation Office.

72. Preliminary findings from both reviews suggest that aligning the GAP with the Strategic Plan has been an effective strategy to embed gender programing into the organization's "core business". The attention brought to specific gender issues through the GAP targeted priorities has been successful in achieving results, especially around key interlinked issues for adolescent girls. Thus the "dual approach" of targeted and mainstreaming priorities will continue in the next phase of the GAP, although with a clearer articulation of and accountability for gender mainstreaming results, which have tended to reflected in programming more slowly than the targeted priorities.

73. An important contributing factor to progress under the GAP has been the investment in senior-level gender expertise that has brought credibility, experience and a foundation for the organization's gender architecture. Regional gender

advisers are supporting the development and implementation of higher quality gender programming in countries. Adequate gender capacity at the country level and within sectors remains a challenge, however.

74. UNICEF will accelerate efforts to build dedicated gender capacity at the country level, while also providing a professional path for gender specialists in key sectoral and thematic areas such as health, education, protection, data and measurement. Strengthening gender capacity among focal points will also be a priority. These efforts are under way with the launch of GenderPro, a gender capacity and credentialing initiative that UNICEF will launch in 2017, in consultation with a range of United Nations, government, foundation and civil society experts. The initiative aims to further professionalize applied gender programming both at UNICEF and across the international development field.

75. An equally important factor underlying progress has been a focus on data, evidence and measurement. In the GAP, 2018-2021, UNICEF will build on its efforts to improve the quality and quantity of gender-relevant and sex-disaggregated data in monitoring and evaluation systems, gender analysis and the Sustainable Development Goals. It will innovate around the collection and use of real-time monitoring, and on effectively packaging and using the gender evidence base for programming on gender issues that are key to the work of UNICEF.

76. UNICEF will continue to capitalize on the factors that have aided implementation of the GAP, 2014-2017, including tools and guidance, technical expertise, and resources and reporting. Coherent global guidance has been particularly effective for programming on the targeted priorities. However, the translation of global guidance for specific country and regional contexts has been a challenge. The advent of programme component strategy notes for each country and stronger periodic review of progress offer a pathway in the next phase of the GAP for translating such guidance to country priorities.

77. Thus the next phase of the Gender Action Plan will continue the UNICEF journey to strengthen gender programming, as well as the institutional systems and investments necessary to achieve gender-equitable results for women and children. The plan will incorporate enhancements and adjustments to modify those elements that are either not well-understood or have been slow to progress, while maintaining and accelerating the elements that have contributed to the progress made to date. In this its final year, the plan will continue to leverage the organization's multisectoral mandate and expertise, and its field presence and partnerships in more than 150 countries and territories, to deliver quality results that advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

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Report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2016

Summary

The present report is submitted to the UNICEF Executive Board in accordance with section 5.4 of the Secretary-General's bulletin on United Nations system-wide application of ethics: separately administered organs and programmes (ST/SGB/2007/11). The report was reviewed and recommendations were provided by the Ethics Panel of the United Nations, as envisaged in the bulletin.

The annual report covers each of the mandated areas of work for the Office: (a) standard-setting and policy support; (b) training, education and outreach; (c) advice and guidance; (d) the Financial Disclosure Programme; (e) the protection of staff against retaliation; and (f) participation in the Ethics Panel of the United Nations and the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations. In accordance with Executive Board decision 2014/12, the report also presents observations/recommendations to management to strengthen the organizational culture of integrity and compliance. The report covers activities relating to UNICEF staff and services provided to UNICEF staff, as well as consultants and other non-staff, to the extent applicable.

* E/ICEF/2017/5.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report, the eighth since the establishment of the UNICEF Ethics Office in December 2007, covers the period 1 January to 31 December 2016. The report, prepared in accordance with the Secretary-General's bulletin on United Nations system-wide application of ethics: separately administered organs and programmes (ST/SGB/2007/11), is submitted to the Executive Board at its annual session in 2017.

II. Overview and general information on activities of the Ethics Office

2. As in previous years, the activities of the Ethics Office were undertaken in the following mandated areas of work:

(a) Provide guidance and policy support to management on ethics standard-setting by reviewing and advising on the rules, policies, procedures and practices of the organization in order to reinforce and promote the highest standards of ethics and integrity as required by the Charter of the United Nations, other applicable staff rules and regulations, the directives of UNICEF and the standards of conduct for the international civil service;

(b) Raise the awareness of staff regarding the values and expected standards of conduct and procedures of the United Nations, through training and other outreach;

(c) Provide confidential advice and guidance to staff and management, at their request, on ethical issues;

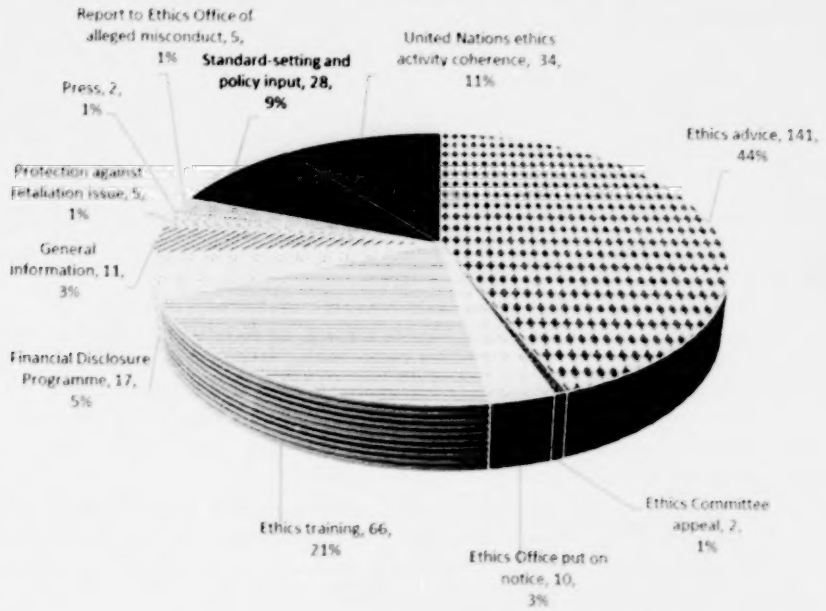
(d) Administer the Financial Disclosure Programme;

(e) Undertake assigned responsibilities under the policy on protection against retaliation;

(f) Contribute to harmonized approaches to ethics issues within the United Nations system.

3. The Ethics Office recorded 321 requests for its services in 2016, compared with 323 requests in 2015 and 261 in 2014. Of these, 44 per cent were requests for confidential ethics advice and guidance (area 2 (c)); 21 per cent were requests for ethics training (area 2 (b)); 11 per cent were related to the coherence and harmonization of United Nations ethics activity (area 2 (f)); and 9 per cent were related to providing guidance and policy support on ethics standard-setting (area 2 (a)). The slightly lower number of recorded requests compared with requests in 2015 does not seem statistically significant and could be attributed to recording differences. Going forward, the Office will look for ways to streamline and modernize the recording of incoming requests, for instance through the acquisition of user-friendly case-management software.

Figure I
Number of requests for Ethics Office services by category, 2016


Report to Ethics Office of alleged misconduct, 5, 1%
Standard-setting and policy input, 28, 9%
United Nations ethics activity coherence, 34, 11%
Press, 2, 1%
Ethics advice, 141, 44%
Protection against Retaliation issue, 5, 1%
General information, 11, 3%
Financial Disclosure Programme, 17, 5%
Ethics training, 66, 21%
Ethics Office put on notice, 10, 3%
Ethics Committee appeal, 2, 1%

4. On the basis of a newly designed work plan for the Ethics Office for 2016/2017, the key emphasis in the activities of the Office in 2016 was on further professionalizing its work and increasing the visibility of the Office and its mandate through a number of outreach initiatives. As noted in the report of the Ethics Office for 2015, there is a continuing need to raise the awareness and understanding of staff members throughout the organization of the mandate of the Office.

5. Throughout 2016, the Office worked closely with offices across UNICEF to achieve seamless and cohesive support to and services for staff members seeking advice on workplace and other staff conduct-related matters. Collaboration was particularly close with the Division of Human Resources, the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations (OIAI), the Office of the Ombudsman for the Funds and Programmes, the Division of Communication and the Information and Communication Technology Division as well as the Global Staff Association at the global and regional levels. The Ethics Office also worked closely with the regional offices and country offices. In addition, the Principal Adviser, Ethics, met regularly — at least on a quarterly basis — with the Executive Director and the Chief of Staff.

Table 1
Comparison of the number of requests for ethics services by category, 2014 to 2016

Category	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*
Ethics advice	122	153	141
Ethics Committee appeal	0	0	2
Ethics Office put on notice	10	8	10
Ethics training	43	37	66
Financial Disclosure Programme	1	36	17

Category	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*
General information	33	13	11
Protection against retaliation	7	12	5
Press	0	0	2
Report to Ethics Office of alleged misconduct	14	27	5
Standard-setting and policy input	20	20	28
United Nations ethics activity coherence	11	17	34
Total	**261**	**323**	**321**

III. Training, education and outreach

6. The main focus of Ethics Office activities in 2016 was training, education and outreach. The overall goal was to further raise organization-wide awareness and understanding of the applicable United Nations staff regulations and rules and UNICEF rules and standards of conduct as well as of the mandate of the Office. To progress towards this goal, the Office diversified the methods and tools it used for training, education and outreach, as further explained below.

7. UNICEF continued to offer and promote the online course entitled "Ethics and Integrity at UNICEF", which was adapted from the e-learning course of the Secretariat and introduced in June 2015. The course, which is available in English, French and Spanish, is mandatory for current staff and is included in the induction package for new staff.

8. In 2016, the Ethics Office received a total of 66 requests for ethics training and awareness sessions or training support. Those requests originated from 27 country offices, 5 regional offices and 9 headquarters offices or divisions. The Ethics Office provided ethics training to a total of 1,569 staff members, with 734 participating in face-to-face sessions and 835 in remote sessions.

9. The Ethics Office held 28 remote ethics training sessions via Skype or video conference, which were focused on ethics only and customized to the needs of the specific recipients, and four joint remote sessions with the Ombudsman and/or OIAI, also via Skype or video conference. The Office held four global webinars, accessible to staff worldwide, on ethics topics that staff had identified as highly relevant, namely (a) Who is who?: the division of functions and tasks between the Division of Human Resources, OIAI, the Office of the Ombudsman and the Ethics Office; (b) Ethics in emergencies; (c) Avoiding conflicts of interests: how to deal with gifts, including honours and awards; and (d) Ethics and career development: networking versus nepotism — where do we draw the line? The webinars attracted up to 150 participants per session globally and 307 participants in total. In light of the successful launch of this new outreach activity, the Ethics Office plans to continue to offer such webinars in 2017.

10. The Ethics Office continued the global roll-out of the Ethics Dialogue Facilitator model that had been introduced in 2014/2015, based on the "train the trainer" model. Through a combination of remote and face-to-face training, the Office trained 85 new Facilitators. As a result, at the end of 2016, all country offices in the Eastern and Southern Africa, West and Central Africa and Middle East and North Africa regions had one or more Facilitators in place. The Office also responded to requests to recommend external ethics trainers, in particular for very large country offices with several field offices, where it was not possible to reach all

staff with online or remote training via Skype or video conference and the provision of face-to-face ethics training by Office staff was not viable.

11. The Ethics Office also provided in-person ethics training and awareness sessions to 734 staff members, of which 396 were staff based in country offices, 278 were members of regional or global management teams and 60 were representatives of the Global Staff Association. In addition to in-person training sessions for staff at headquarters and in regional and country offices, the Principal Adviser attended and held ethics sessions at two regional management team meetings, the September 2016 Global Management Team meeting and the annual general meeting of the Global Staff Association, and held an induction course for new country office representatives. The Ethics Office also held an in-person ethics session for new staff at headquarters.

12. On the basis of feedback received, and drawing on research in adult education, the Ethics Office made continuous efforts to tailor training and awareness sessions to make them even more customized and situation-specific, with a stronger emphasis on dialogue and awareness.

13. Finally, the Ethics Office took the lead in facilitating collaboration with the Ethics Office of the United Nations Population Fund and its human resources staff, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) to adapt the Secretariat's online training on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse for use by the funds and programmes. The online training is expected to be launched in UNICEF in 2017.

IV. Advice and guidance

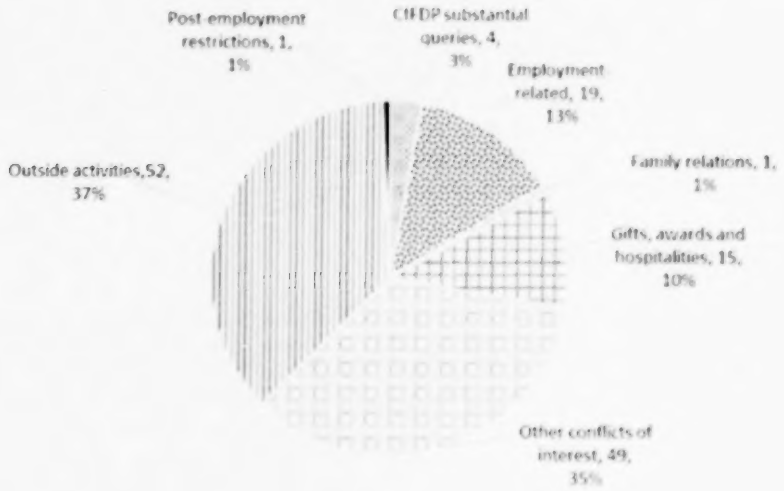
14. The Ethics Office recorded 141 individual requests for ethics advice in 2016, compared with 153 in 2015 and 122 in 2014. As shown in figure II, over one third of the requests (37 per cent) were related to the outside activities of staff members and another third (35 per cent) were related to other conflicts of interest. While the majority of requests came from individual staff members, some came from managers seeking advice on requests from staff members wanting to engage in outside activities. A significant number of requests concerning outside activities also came to the Office as consultation matters from the Policy and Administrative Law Section in the Division of Human Resources. Within the category of requests concerning outside activities and conflicts of interest, the Office noted a significant interest in advice on permissible outside activities somewhat related to, but not part of, the staff member's current official capacity. Such requests may be a reflection of modern employment realities, in which the international civil service may, for many reasons, no longer be a lifelong full-time career. Accordingly, staff members increasingly would like to and may need to explore other options, even while employed at UNICEF.

15. Just over 10 per cent of requests were related to employment, a significantly lower number than in previous years. Such requests were often connected to performance management and interpersonal problems, usually between a staff member and a supervisor. The significantly lower number of such requests might suggest that the outreach efforts by the Ethics Office (for instance through the "Who is who" webinar) and its close collaboration with the Division of Human Resources, the Office of the Ombudsman and the Global Staff Association have contributed to the more appropriate channelling of many of the employment-related requests — namely to the Office of the Ombudsman. In addition, the fact that the Division of Human Resources introduced a new performance management system (Achieve),

accompanied by a significant staff-awareness campaign, may also have contributed to lowering the number of performance management-related requests directed to the Ethics Office.

16. With regard to conflicts of interest, the Ethics Office maintained close collaboration with the Division of Human Resources regarding advice provided to staff members. The majority of questions in this category continued to come to the Office through the Division, although there was a welcome increase in the number of requests from country office staff and management regarding the management of conflicts of interest for locally recruited staff. We were pleased to note that several requests for advice referenced the "Ethics and Integrity at UNICEF" course, i.e., it appeared that after taking the course, staff members' awareness of potential ethics dilemmas had increased and they subsequently contacted the Office with requests for advice and guidance.

Figure II
Requests for ethics advice by subcategory, 2016


Post employment restrictions, 1, 1%
CIFDP substantial queries, 4, 3%
Employment related, 19, 13%
Family relations, 1, 1%
Gifts, awards and hospitalities, 15, 10%
Other conflicts of interest, 49, 35%
Outside activities,52, 37%

Abbreviation: CIFDP — Conflict of Interest and Financial Disclosure Programme (see para. 25).

V. Standard-setting and policy support

17. Under ST/SGB/2007/11, the Ethics Office provides guidance and policy support to management on ethics standard-setting by reviewing and advising on the rules, policies, procedures and practices of the organization in order to reinforce and promote the highest standards of ethics and integrity.

18. To assist the Ethics Office in meeting this aspect of its mandate, the Office held regular collaborative meetings with the Policy and Administrative Law Section in the Division of Human Resources, OIAI, the Staff Counsellor and the Office of the Ombudsman. The Principal Adviser was also included in the regular update meetings at the level of the Deputy Executive Directors and the Chief of Staff, except for closed meetings.

19. During the reporting period, the Ethics Office was consulted and provided advice on several policy projects, including the development of the Policy on

Conduct Promoting the Protection and Safeguarding of Children and the updated Guidance Note on the Use of Social Media. In addition, the Office was consulted on the organizational response to several Joint Inspection Unit reports, developments within the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, in particular in relation to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and the Statement by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Principals regarding Zero Tolerance on Sexual Harassment and Abuse in the Humanitarian Sector.

20. The Policy on Conduct Promoting the Protection and Safeguarding of Children was approved by the Executive Director and made available to all staff in mid-2016. It is the understanding of the Ethics Office that further steps will be undertaken to operationalize this policy. The Ethics Office hopes to have the opportunity to work closely with relevant stakeholders in UNICEF in that respect.

21. The Guidance Note on the Use of Social Media was jointly approved by the Director of Communications and the Director of Human Resources and made available to all staff on 1 February 2017, shortly after the end of the reporting period. The Ethics Office had been consulted by the Division of Communications and provided its views, which are fully reflected in the Guidance Note.

22. The Ethics Office was informally consulted on a number of cross-cutting ethics issues for which a joined-up approach was deemed useful by various stakeholders. The topics included the experience of UNICEF in applying ethics guidelines for research on and with children; ethics in evidence-gathering; engagement with the private sector; post-employment policy; and accountability to populations affected by emergencies.

23. As part of its policy and standard-setting function, the Ethics Office provided a briefing on its programme activities at the annual meeting of the UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee. It became apparent during the reporting period that there was no standard process or practice regarding when, how and in what format the Office should be consulted in matters of ethics standard-setting and policy support. While it was possible in several instances to proceed informally and on an ad hoc basis, it might be beneficial for all stakeholders to consider and clarify how they will involve the Office in ethics standard-setting and policy-support matters, in order to ensure that input from the Office has the organizational impact envisaged in its mandate.

VI. Financial Disclosure Programme

24. The Ethics Office manages and administers the UNICEF Financial Disclosure Programme and strives to ensure that the programme is incorporated into the culture of the organization. In the view of the Office, the Financial Disclosure Programme plays a significant role in enhancing trust in and the credibility of UNICEF, both internally and externally (which, under ST/SGB/2007/11, is the ultimate goal of the Office). In order to increase awareness of the importance of managing conflicts of interest, the Office, in internal communications with staff members, has long referred to this programme as the Conflict of Interest and Financial Disclosure Programme (CIFDP). The programme, which has now reached its ninth year of operation, was designed to protect UNICEF against conflicts of interest and various organizational risks relating to the outside activities and financial engagements of staff members. The CIFDP consists of the following process steps: (a) the registration of participating staff members; (b) filing by participating staff members; (c) review by the Ethics Office; (d) verification by the Ethics Office; and (d) the issuance of guidance notes and clearance letters by the Ethics Office.

25. In accordance with the Executive Directive on Financial Disclosure and Declaration of Interest Statements (CF/EXD/2012-003), all staff members at the D-1 level and above and any staff member whose responsibilities are identified in the Financial Disclosure Policy of UNICEF are required to file a Financial Disclosure Statement. In addition to pre-selected staff members who are required to file due to their level or functional title, additional staff members are selected, in accordance with the policy, jointly by the Ethics Office and the head of the relevant office or division, during the annual filer registration process. The Ethics Office relies upon the individual offices and divisions for the selection of additional staff members on the basis of the registration guidelines issued by the Ethics Office.

Table 2
Compliance with the Financial Disclosure Programme, 2007-2016

Year	*Number of staff required to file*	*Compliance (percentage)*
2007	2 545	82.8
2008	2 556	83.8
2009	2 536	100.0
2010	2 365	99.6
2011	2 592	99.7
2012	2 694	99.9
2013	2 498	100.0
2014	2 594	100.0
2015	2 549	98.9
2016	2 524	99.3

26. A total of 2,507 staff members were reviewed as part of the 2016 CIFDP exercise, covering the reporting year ending 31 December 2015. Director-level staff comprised 4.8 per cent of the total number of reviews, staff members in the international professional category 47.2 per cent, staff in the national professional category 23 per cent and staff in the general service category 25 per cent.

27. The Ethics Office collaborates with the Division of Human Resources, regional directors and heads of offices to raise awareness and understanding of the ultimate purpose of the CIFDP. While compliance by every participating staff member is monitored, the Office considers that senior staff members have a role-model function when it comes to CIFDP compliance. Appointments and contract renewals of senior staff members are subject to confirmed compliance with the programme. This ensures that all senior managers adhere to the Financial Disclosure Policy and are aware of the potential conflict-of-interest issues that could harm the organization.

28. An analysis of the reviews shows that 11.8 per cent of staff participating in the 2016 CIFDP had nothing to declare (they answered "no" to all questions), 85.1 per cent either indicated that they had no conflict of interest or declared personal circumstances in which there was some remote connection to the United Nations or UNICEF that did not currently amount to an actual or even a potential conflict of interest; and 2 per cent had a potential conflict of interest. A total of 1.1 per cent of staff had recognized their own conflict of interest and had already taken proactive steps to mitigate it.

29. The review of the Financial Disclosure Statement is a crucial step towards understanding the conflict-of-interest risk for a given staff member. Following the review, the Ethics Office works with the respective staff members and sometimes the staff member's supervisor or the Division of Human Resources, in an effort to

mitigate risks related to conflicts of interest and to provide staff members with guidance on how to prevent conflicts related to their professional obligations.

30. One type of situation that can lead to potential conflicts of interest is related to staff with family members who work in the United Nations system. The background to this is that under the applicable United Nations Staff Regulations and Rules, staff members may have a spouse working in the same organization (subject to certain limitations, such as the absence of a direct reporting line) and UNICEF has a spousal employment policy that is intended to support mobility among UNICEF staff members. In contrast to this, the employment of close relatives as staff members within the same United Nations entity is prohibited. However, this prohibition does not apply between different United Nations entities. Among staff selected to participate in the 2016 CIFDP exercise, 3.1 per cent had spouses who worked for UNICEF and 11.2 per cent had spouses who worked for other United Nations agencies or UNICEF-related entities, such as partners, non-governmental organizations and vendors. In addition, 15.4 per cent of staff had relatives who worked for UNICEF, other United Nations agencies or UNICEF-related entities.

31. Another source of potential conflicts of interest is related to the outside activities of staff members. Among staff selected to participate in the 2016 CIFDP exercise, 5.3 per cent were involved in such activities or had leadership roles with non-United Nations entities during the reporting period. An area of concern for the Ethics Office is the fact that in some instances staff members who, according to their disclosures in the 2016 CIFDP exercise, were engaged in outside activities, had not sought or received the prior approval called for in Executive Directive CF/EXD/2012-009.

32. The verification process is an important and integral part of the Financial Disclosure Programme and serves to improve the accuracy of the information disclosed by staff members. A randomly selected sample of staff members are asked to provide supporting documents for the Financial Disclosure Statements that they have filed. During the reporting period, the Ethics Office conducted its fourth disclosure verification exercise.

33. Out of the overall number of 2,507 participating staff members in the 2016 CIFDP exercise, those who had been verified during the previous two years (142) and those who had nothing to declare (296) were removed, leaving 2,069 eligible for verification. About 3.5 per cent (73 statements), diversified by location and grade, were randomly selected for verification. Among the results, the distribution by region is proportional to the population, whereas the distribution by grade is skewed towards the higher grade levels. Among staff selected for verification, 44 per cent were from the P-5 level and above and 19 per cent from the NO-3 to NO-5 level.

VII. Protection of staff against retaliation

34. During the reporting period, there were four requests for protection under the UNICEF whistle-blower protection policy and one inquiry, which ultimately did not proceed to a request for protection. The Ethics Office, on the basis of an initial examination, determined that none of the four requests indicated a case of prima facie retaliation. Rather, the Office concluded that the staff members had made a report of alleged misconduct only after they had already been informed of an impending detrimental action, i.e., a personnel measure that would negatively affect them, such as the abolition of post or a non-extension of contract. In other words, the Office concluded that in these cases, attempts were made to trigger the whistle-blower protection mechanism to stop a personnel measure that would negatively

affect the respective staff member, without sufficient indication that there had been a protected activity at the outset.

35. As presented in the annual report of the Ethics Office for 2015, the outcome of the Global Staff Survey 2014 indicated that 51 percent of survey respondents perceived that they could speak up. Notwithstanding the outcome of the four requests for whistle-blower protection in 2016, the Office will continue to monitor the issue of whistle-blowing very closely in 2017.

36. Since her arrival in February 2016, the Principal Adviser has had numerous opportunities during the in-person ethics training, awareness and outreach activities (see para. 11) to explore with staff at headquarters, regional and country offices their perceptions regarding their ability to speak up. On the basis of feedback received during these interactions, it appears that there continue to be significant concerns among staff members regarding the three tenets identified in the 2015 annual report as necessary for a speak-up culture: (a) a staff member can speak up without fear of retaliation or other negative consequences; (b) speaking up is not futile; and (c) working mechanisms to resolve questions of misconduct or other disputes are applied fairly. At the same time, the Division of Human Resources, during the reporting period and as part of the Human Resources Reform project, took a number of initiatives to address issues identified during the Global Staff Survey 2014. In 2016, the Division introduced 360° assessments as a developmental tool for members of the Senior Staff Rotation group, which includes about 220 top managers. The tool can also be made available to less-senior staff members upon request. It is expected that the introduction of the tool, although currently intended to be primarily developmental, may in the long run also have a positive impact on speak-up culture.

37. A new global staff survey was issued in early 2017 containing the same or similar questions as the survey of 2014, in order to establish whether there had been any change in staff perceptions of their ability to speak up. The Ethics Office is committed to continuing its work with other stakeholders throughout the organization, in particular the Division of Human Resources, OIAI, the Staff Counsellor, the Office of the Ombudsman and the Global Staff Association, as well as those at the regional and country office levels, to increase staff trust in the three tenets of a speak-up culture.

VIII. Ethics Panel of the United Nations and the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations

38. In 2016, the Principal Adviser participated in all 11 meetings of the Ethics Panel of the United Nations. In addition to the meetings, the panel members frequently consulted each other with a view to harmonizing ethics advice, guidance and practices. All members of the panel have been a great source of peer support for the new Principal Adviser. The ongoing exchange and dialogue with other panel members have contributed to greater consistency in the provision of individual advice and guidance and to greater harmonization in the interpretation of applicable policies among the participating funds and programmes. Further information on the work of panel is available in the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Ethics Office (A/71/334) covering the period from 1 August 2015 to 31 July 2016 that was presented at the seventy-first session of the General Assembly.

39. UNICEF also participates in the yearly meeting of the Ethics Network of the Multilateral Organizations. The meeting is an important forum for sharing experience and developing best practices. In 2016, the Principal Adviser participated in and gave a presentation at a panel session on post-employment and re-employment restrictions within the international civil service and related ethics issues.

IX. Progress on 2015 recommendations

40. With respect to the recommendations made in the report of the Ethics Office for 2015, significant progress has been made in all areas, as follows: (a) it is the understanding of the Ethics Office that completion rates for the "Ethics and Integrity at UNICEF" course that was introduced in 2015 are being monitored by each office or division; (b) a new global staff survey was issued in early 2017, which among other issues, also covers the topics suggested as part of the recommendations made in the report of the Ethics Office for 2015; (c) the Policy on Conduct Promoting the Protection and Safeguarding of Children was approved by the Executive Director and made available to all staff in mid-2016 (see para. 20); and (d) the Guidance Note on the Use of Social Media was jointly approved by the Director of Communications and the Director of Human Resources and made available to all staff on 1 February 2017, shortly after the end of the reporting period (see para. 21).

X. Observations

41. Staff members, in general, show high levels of engagement, they love their jobs and are deeply committed to the mandate of UNICEF. However, to preserve this high level of engagement and good will, UNICEF needs to continue to demonstrate at all levels its strong and unwavering commitment to cultivating and nurturing a culture of ethics, integrity and accountability, and thereby enhancing the trust in, and the credibility of, the United Nations, both internally and externally. Advocating for an even stronger speak-up culture will only be credible and successful if there is a listening culture — even if it means at times listening to, receiving and accepting what may look like "bad news".

42. In that context, the results of the new Global Staff Survey 2017 will provide a framework for further nurturing staff engagement, in order to continue to build on the progress made as part of the initiatives taken since the Global Staff Survey 2014. The Ethics Office is also encouraged by the fact that the Division of Human Resources is currently exploring ways to further expand multirater feedback, as part of the new performance management system.

43. With two professional posts (a third one having been approved in 2016 and filled in early 2017) and one general service post, for a mandate covering just under 12,000 staff members worldwide, the Ethics Office is in relative and absolute terms a very small office. This does not mean that it is impossible for the Office to make an effective contribution to achieving its mandate. It means, however, that its success depends upon close collaboration with and strong support from relevant internal stakeholders at all levels across the organization and its ability to create synergies by leveraging such collaboration. During the reporting period, the Office benefitted from such collaboration and support with respect to most of the relevant stakeholders. The Ethics Office stands ready and is looking forward to continuing its outreach to and engagement with other relevant internal stakeholders, to continue to create such synergies.

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Item 7 of the provisional agenda*

Annual report for 2016 on the evaluation function in UNICEF

Summary

The present report documents evaluation activities undertaken by UNICEF in 2016. It provides a review of the status of the evaluation function within UNICEF and a report on progress made in the implementation of the revised Evaluation Policy (E/ICEF/2013/14). The report also covers the governance of the function within UNICEF and efforts made to promote evaluation coherence within the United Nations system and more widely. It presents updates on performance and results, a summary of the findings from recent assessments of the evaluation function and an annex detailing the status of evaluations proposed in the plan for global thematic evaluations for 2016. Elements of a decision for consideration by the Executive Board are also provided.

* E/ICEF/2017/1

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I. Introduction

1. Towards the end of 2016, the General Assembly selected Antonio Guterres as the new Secretary-General of the United Nations. Before his appointment, he set out his vision for the Organization in a comprehensive statement, which emphasized the importance of transparency, accountability and oversight. Speaking to delegates in April 2016, he further observed that, in the United Nations, "We need a culture of evaluation — independent and real-time evaluation with full transparency."[1]

2. UNICEF is committed to transparency, accountability and effective oversight, and the evaluation function in UNICEF contributes towards this. In line with its revised Evaluation Policy (E/ICEF/2013/14), UNICEF uses evaluation to demonstrate results, promote accountability and provide evidence for better policies and programmes. In this way, evaluation contributes directly towards the achievement of the mission, mandate and priorities of the organization and, more widely, of the United Nations system.

3. The present report documents the evaluation activities undertaken by UNICEF in 2016. It reports on progress in the implementation of the revised Evaluation Policy and presents updates on performance and results. As in previous years, the report considers the governance of the function within UNICEF and the efforts made to promote evaluation coherence within the United Nations system and more widely. It also summarizes the findings of recent assessments of the evaluation function. Elements of a decision for consideration by the Executive Board are provided in section VIII.

II. Governance of the evaluation function

4. The Executive Board maintains oversight of the evaluation function within UNICEF and upholds the central role that it plays within the organization. At the annual session of the Executive Board in June 2016, the Evaluation Office presented the annual report for 2015 on the evaluation function, which was complemented by a management perspective presented by senior management. Responding to the annual report, Board members raised pertinent issues concerning the function and issued decision 2016/7, which addressed the following issues: (a) the geographical and thematic coverage of evaluations; (b) progress towards achieving the evaluation policy target of allocating a minimum of 1 per cent of overall programme expenditures to evaluation; (c) the timely delivery of management responses and their implementation; and (d) the development of national capacities for evaluation. At the Board's request, an action plan for achieving the 1-per-cent policy target was presented to the Board by management at the second regular session in 2016. Progress towards the target is described in section V.

5. The Executive Board also requested that an external peer review of the evaluation function be undertaken to meet a requirement in the revised Evaluation Policy. Arrangements for this are reported in section VI.

6. Evaluation reports, each accompanied by a management response, were presented at all three sessions of the Executive Board in 2016, with more extended presentations and discussions at informal briefings ahead of each session. The following documents were presented:

[1] United Nations Evaluation Group, "United Nations-designated Secretary-General calls for strong culture of evaluation" (www.unevaluation.org/mediacenter/newscenter/newsdetail/121).

(a) Plan for global thematic evaluations 2014-2017: review and update for 2016-2017 (E/ICEF/2016/3), which included the rescheduling of some evaluations listed in the original plan;

(b) "Protecting children from violence: A comprehensive evaluation of UNICEF's strategies and programme performance";

(c) "Equity, scalability and sustainability in UNICEF water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programming: Evidence from UNICEF evaluations 2007-2015, an evaluation synthesis report";

(d) "Increasing access and equity in early childhood education in the CEE/CIS region", an independent multi-country evaluation commissioned and managed by the Regional Office.

7. The Global Evaluation Committee, an internal body that provides oversight of evaluation issues, met in June 2016. Members approved changes in the membership and mode of operation of the Committee, considered proposals to strengthen evaluation coverage and the implementation of agreed actions in evaluation management responses and took note of arrangements for the external peer review.

8. The external Audit Advisory Committee considers evaluation to be an important element of the oversight system and monitors the performance of the evaluation function. In its 2015 annual report, presented to the Executive Board in 2016, the Committee took particular note of the need for management to continue to improve its follow-up to evaluation recommendations, and requested to be informed of progress in such follow-up.[2]

III. Promoting evaluation coherence within the United Nations

9. The quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR),[3] adopted by the General Assembly on 21 December 2016, provided an important orientation for all United Nations development activities, including evaluation. The QCPR emphasizes the need to better support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through system-wide strategic planning, implementation, reporting and evaluation. In 2016, UNICEF continued to contribute towards the development of an independent system-wide evaluation mechanism.

10. In the 2016 QCPR, the General Assembly noted the need to strengthen support to national institutions in developing their capacities for planning, management and evaluation. UNICEF support to national evaluation capacity development in 2016 is described in section IV.

11. The General Assembly also urged organizations within the United Nations system to continue their efforts to harmonize their requirements regarding reporting, monitoring and evaluation in order to reduce transaction costs and boost efficiency. UNICEF recognizes the value of effective partnerships, and contributes to efforts to harmonize evaluation activities and build capacity, notably by developing agreed global standards, methods and agendas. Key initiatives include activities undertaken by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), joint evaluation activities and support to the independent system-wide evaluation mechanism.

[2] See www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/UNICEF_Audit_Advisory_Committee_2015_AR-13Apr16-FINAL.pdf.

[3] General Assembly resolution 71/243.

A. United Nations Evaluation Group

12. UNEG brings together evaluation offices across the United Nations system to undertake joint activities aimed at strengthening and harmonizing evaluation activities within the Organization and building stronger evaluation partnerships beyond the United Nations system. In 2016, UNICEF continued to play an active role in UNEG. The Director of the Evaluation Office continued to serve as UNEG Vice-Chair (Partnerships), one of four UNEG Vice-Chairs, and UNICEF staff participated in several working groups.

13. In 2016, UNEG concentrated its efforts to further professionalize the evaluation function. Key outputs included the publication of a revised and updated version of the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation[4] and the UNEG Evaluation Competency Framework.[5] Evaluation Office staff contributed to task groups on evaluation use and professionalization, as well as to the UNEG Humanitarian Evaluation Interest Group, which, in 2016, published a meta-analysis of evaluation practice entitled "Reflecting Humanitarian Principles in Evaluation".[6]

14. UNICEF also supported the advocacy of UNEG on evaluation issues, building upon the landmark General Assembly resolution 69/237, adopted in 2015, which called upon the United Nations to support Member States to build capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level. In the context of country-led activities geared towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, support for enhancing the capacity of national evaluation systems takes on particular significance. In this regard, working with sister agencies, UNICEF hosted two well-attended events in 2016 focused on evaluation and the Goals, featuring high-level speakers from a wide range of countries as well as the United Nations. The events were arranged as side meetings of, respectively, the sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women[7] and the meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, held under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council.[8]

B. Independent system-wide evaluation of United Nations operational activities for development

15. In the 2012 QCPR (resolution 67/226), the General Assembly provided for the establishment of an independent system-wide evaluation mechanism and reiterated in the 2016 QCPR its call for such a mechanism, specifically underscoring "the importance of strengthening a high-quality, independent and impartial system-wide evaluation mechanism of operational activities for development that enhances coherence and interdependence in the overall evaluation architecture of the United Nations development system … using its findings and recommendations to improve the functioning of the system".

16. UNICEF has supported work on the mechanism from the outset, contributing funding and making significant technical contributions through participation in evaluation management groups established to pilot two independent, system-wide evaluations. In 2016, two evaluations were successfully completed:

[4] www.uneval.org/document/detail/1914.
[5] www.uneval.org/document/detail/1915.
[6] www.uneval.org/document/detail/1862.
[7] www.evalpartners.org/evalgender/evaluating-SDGs-with-an-equity-focused-and-gender-responsive-lens.
[8] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=20000&nr=480&menu=2993.

(a) "Meta-evaluation and synthesis of United Nation Development Assistance Framework evaluations, with a particular focus on poverty eradication".[9]

The evaluation findings called for improved coverage, quality and resourcing of UNDAF evaluations;

(b) "Evaluation of the contribution of the United Nations Development system to strengthening national capacities for statistical analysis and data collection to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals".[10]

In view of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the evaluation report called for the strengthening of joint data collection and statistical capacity development across the United Nations system.

17. The independent system-wide evaluation mechanism was independently reviewed at the end of 2016 and the report of the review is forthcoming.

C. Inter-agency Humanitarian Evaluation Steering Group

18. The Inter-agency Humanitarian Evaluation Steering Group, which comprises both United Nations agencies and humanitarian non-governmental organizations, has continued to undertake joint evaluation activities. In 2016, the group disseminated the findings from the inter-agency evaluation of the United Nations response to the crisis in South Sudan[11] (completed in 2015). It also completed three additional reports:

(a) "Syria coordinated accountability and lesson learning (CALL) evaluation synthesis and gap analysis",[12] which covers the main issues highlighted in 24 publicly available evaluations and evaluative studies concerning the international response to the Syria crisis between 2012 and 2015;

(b) "Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the response to the crisis in the Central African Republic",[13] which concluded that the inter-agency response made a large positive impact on the crisis, although coverage remained a major challenge;

(c) "Synthesis of key findings from inter-agency humanitarian evaluations of the international responses to crises in the Philippines (Typhoon Haiyan), South Sudan and the Central African Republic".[14]

This synthesis of the key findings drew out a wide range of lessons relating to needs assessment and prioritization; strategic and operational planning; measuring effectiveness; leadership and accountability; stakeholder engagement; and questions concerning the need for context-sensitive application of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle.

IV. Promoting evaluation coherence globally

A. Development networks

[9] www.unjiu.org/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU_REP_2016_6_Final_English.pdf.
[10] www.unjiu.org/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU_REP_2016_5_Final_English.pdf.
[11] www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_92844.html.
[12] www.interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/ocha_syria_web_interactive_2.pdf.
[13] www.interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/print_final.pdf.
[14] www.interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/web_interactive_0.pdf.

19. The main channel for UNICEF engagement in the promotion of evaluation coherence at the global level beyond the United Nations networks has been through EvalPartners, a global movement aimed at enhancing the capacities of civil society organizations to influence policymakers and to engage in national evaluation processes, through innovative partnerships and networking.[15] EvalPartners is a partnership that links UNEG with the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation, a network of national and regional evaluation associations. UNICEF co-founded EvalPartners in 2012; the partnership has since become increasingly active and influential. A key output has been the development, through a consultative process, of the Global Evaluation Agenda 2016-2020, which is focused on evaluation capacity development and professionalization. The publication and dissemination of the Global Evaluation Agenda was supported by UNICEF. The organization also contributed substantially to the fulfilment of EvalPartners' mission and objectives in 2016. Throughout the year, the Director of the UNICEF Evaluation Office served as Co-Chair of EvalPartners, in his capacity as UNEG Vice-Chair (Partnerships).

20. EvalPartners has generated a set of global networks that operate under its umbrella. UNICEF has played a leading role in EvalSDGs, a network formed to support the integration of evaluation into national, regional and global systems for the planning and review of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Partnership with the International Institute for Environment and Development provided a channel for publishing a series of briefing papers on evaluation of the Goals. Five papers were produced in 2016, of which three were the most-downloaded publications of the Institute in 2016.

21. UNICEF also provides technical support to the Steering Committee of the Global Parliamentarians' Forum for Evaluation and, in 2016, contributed to the creation of a Eurasian Regional Parliamentarians' Forum for Evaluation. The UNICEF country office in Kyrgyzstan, working closely with the national authorities, played an important supporting role.

B. Humanitarian networks

22. In the field of humanitarian evaluation, UNICEF has continued to work with the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action. In 2016, the network published the Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Guide. On the basis of the guide, UNICEF has developed a hands-on capacity-building initiative for UNICEF country offices and government partners on conducting evaluations (see section V), and also provided training for civil society organizations at the Second International Francophone Forum on Evaluation, held in Marrakesh, Morocco, in 2016.

V. Performance of the evaluation function

23. UNICEF reports on performance of the evaluation function against seven core indicators:

(a) The number of evaluations managed and submitted to the Evaluation and Research Database;

(b) Topical distribution;

(c) Types of evaluations conducted;

[15] See www.evalpartners.org.

(d) Evaluation quality;

(e) Evaluation use;

(f) Corporate spending on evaluation;

(g) Production of corporate evaluations.

Each indicator is discussed below. The overall picture that emerges is one of continued improvement, confirming the general picture presented in previous annual reports. However, this generally positive story is disturbed by variations in performance over time and by region. There is a clear need for greater consistency.

24. Key findings include the following:

(a) The number of evaluations submitted to the Evaluation and Research Database has returned to acceptable levels, reaching 90 evaluations in 2015 and 102 evaluations in 2016;

(b) However, the geographical coverage of UNICEF evaluation remains below 80 per cent of all countries in which UNICEF is active, and shows significant variation between regions;

(c) Thematic coverage shows a balanced topical distribution between child survival, education and child protection, but very low coverage of the cross-cutting issues of social inclusion, humanitarian action and gender equality;

(d) The quality of evaluations submitted in 2015 dipped significantly compared with previous years, but recovered in 2016. Analysis has linked the drop in quality to increased diversity in the evaluation portfolio;

(e) There was a significant improvement in the submission of management responses, with 95 per cent of evaluations submitted in 2015 followed by a management response. Attention still needs to be given to improving the implementation of management responses;

(f) Budget use for evaluation was more than $50 million in 2016, an increase over 2015, when the corresponding figure was just under $45 million. However, these figures represent only 0.8 per cent of the total budget use for each year. Further progress is required to meet the policy target of 1 per cent.

25. The indicators in this section draw upon data generated by the UNICEF Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS). Evaluations submitted to the Evaluation and Research Database are routinely assessed by an external company and a meta-evaluation of results is published each year. Evaluations submitted to the database in 2015 were assessed and rated for quality in 2016 and the results were published.[16]

Indicator 1: Number of evaluations managed and submitted to the Evaluation and Research Database

26. In its decision 2016/7,[17] the Executive Board requested a geographic and thematic overview of the coverage of evaluations in the next annual report on the evaluation function in UNICEF. The overview is provided in this segment, on indicator 1, and in the segment on indicator 2, topical distribution.

[16] "UNICEF Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS) meta-analysis 2015: An independent review of UNICEF evaluation report quality and trends, 2009-2015" (https://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_92693.html).

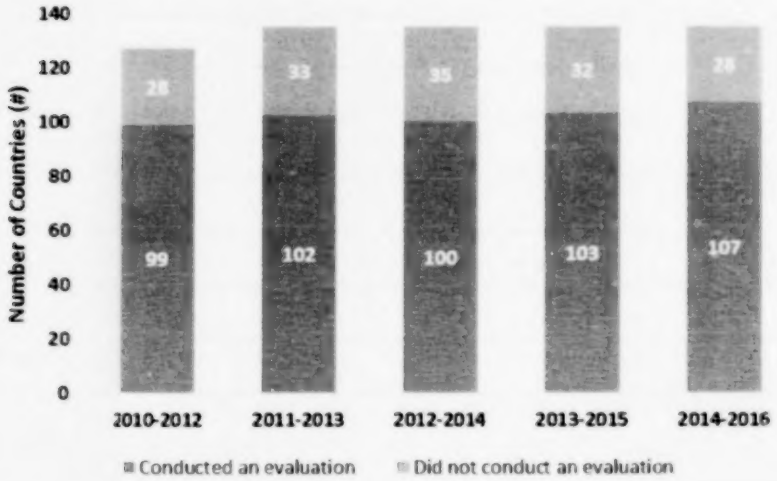
[17] See E/ICEF/2016/15.

27. In 2015, 90 evaluation reports were submitted to the Evaluation and Research Database, an increase of 13 per cent over the total of 80 evaluations submitted in 2014. The number of evaluation reports submitted in 2016 indicates a continued increase, with 102 reports.

28. Despite fluctuations in the total number of reports submitted, geographical coverage has changed little over the period 2010-2015, as shown in figure I. Here, geographical coverage is considered to be the proportion of country offices that submitted at least one evaluation report to the database in the reporting year or in the preceding two years. Geographical coverage remained at approximately 75 per cent over the period. In the period 2013-2015, 103 countries (76 per cent) submitted at least one evaluation report, while 32 country offices (24 per cent) did not. However, 9 of the 32 offices submitted evaluation reports in 2016.

29. In view of the last point, it might be expected that global coverage in 2016 would improve. An analysis of geographical coverage in the 2014-2016 period indicates that while 107 country offices submitted evaluations in the relevant period — an improvement on previous years — as many as 28 country offices did not. The global coverage rate for 2016 is therefore similar to previous years and remains below 80 per cent.

Figure I
Evaluation coverage trends, 2010-2016



Source: UNICEF Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS).

30. Regional analysis throws light on the issues. The number of evaluations submitted in 2015 varies by region, with the Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS), East Asia and the Pacific (EAPR), Eastern and Southern Africa (ESAR), South Asia (SA) and West and Central Africa (WCAR) each submitting 12 or more evaluations, while the other regions submitted fewer (see table 1).

Table 1
Regional evaluation submission rates, 2012-2016

	Region							
Year	*CEE/CIS*	*EAPR*	*ESAR*	*LACR*	*MENA*	*SA*	*WCAR*	*Total*
2012	16	8	29	10	10	7	34	114
2013	17	7	36	17	7	4	24	112
2014	15	6	13	8	4	14	12	72
2015	14	14	17	7	8	12	15	87
2016	9	12	26	13	6	13	13	92

Abbreviations: Central and Eastern Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS), East Asia and the Pacific (EAPR), Eastern and Southern Africa (ESAR), Latin America and Caribbean (LACR), Middle East and North Africa (MENA), South Asia (SA) and West and Central Africa (WCAR)
Source: GEROS

31. It is more meaningful to consider the coverage rates and trends by region, however. In the period 2013-2015, all countries in SA submitted at least one evaluation, resulting in a regional geographical coverage rate of 100 per cent. ESAR was close behind, with coverage of 95 per cent, and CEE/CIS performance was also above average, with 82 per cent coverage, while other regions were trailing. Figures for the period 2014-2016 show greater consistency across regions (see table 2). The sharp improvement in coverage in EAPR is especially noteworthy.

Table 2
Geographical evaluation coverage by region, 2013-2016

	Region (percentage)						
Period	*CEE/CIS*	*EAPR*	*ESAR*	*LACR*	*MENA*	*SA*	*WCAR*
2013-2015	82	73	95	56	65	100	76
2014-2016	86	93	82	64	65	100	80

Source: GEROS

32. Evaluation coverage is dependent upon the conditions prevailing in the different countries and regions and the resources available to regional and country offices. The countries that struggle to undertake evaluations tend to be those with small programmes and limited resources. Creative evaluation planning has successfully addressed this issue in CEE/CIS, where the Regional Office has for several years played a key role in coordinating and managing multi-country evaluations, drawing on pooled resources. This approach could be applied elsewhere.

33. The political context poses a major constraint to conducting evaluations in some countries, with considerable challenges in countries experiencing conflict. Yet in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA), for example, several UNICEF offices have found ways of undertaking useful evaluations despite protracted armed conflict and the immense challenges affecting the region.

34. Finally, an analysis of regional productivity over time yields some surprises. In two regions, as shown in table 1, the number of evaluations completed has doubled in comparison with earlier years. Production in SA jumped from 4 evaluations in 2013 to 14 in 2014, and in EAPR, the number of evaluations

increased from 6 in 2014 to 14 in 2015. In other regions, the numbers dropped by half. Both ESAR and WCAR submitted a high number of evaluations in 2012 and 2013, but output dropped by around 50 per cent in the two succeeding years. The cases of high productivity demonstrate what is possible, while pervasive fluctuations indicate the importance of sustained effort and close oversight.

Indicator 2: Topical distribution

35. This segment is concerned with thematic coverage, an issue on which the Executive Board has requested information. Thematic coverage is addressed through annual reporting against the key performance indicator of topical distribution, which reviews the evaluation portfolio in terms of the various outcome areas and cross-cutting issues, or themes, set out in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017.

36. For the present analysis, 87 reports submitted in 2015 were considered.[18] The results show a balanced topical distribution between child survival, education and child protection, with child survival (comprising health, HIV/AIDS, nutrition and WASH) the subject of 25 reports (29 per cent); education the subject of 24 reports (28 per cent); and child protection the subject of 22 reports (25 per cent).[19]

37. Only a handful of the 87 evaluations reviewed were focused specifically on the cross-cutting themes of social inclusion, humanitarian action and gender, despite the importance of those areas. Social inclusion is a key outcome area under the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017, but only two evaluation reports on that topic were submitted. Although coverage of these issues appears to be low, many evaluations that are focused mainly on sectoral issues do include some coverage of social inclusion, humanitarian action and gender equality.

38. Humanitarian action is included in the Strategic Plan as an important cross-cutting issue, yet only two evaluation reports that were focused specifically on humanitarian issues were submitted. In recent years, humanitarian action has been a major and growing area of work for UNICEF. While UNICEF has undertaken various unpublished reviews and lesson-learning exercises, there is a need across UNICEF for the systematic evaluation of humanitarian action and the necessary follow-up.

39. Recognizing that limited evaluation "know-how" can be a constraint in humanitarian emergencies, the Evaluation Office has launched a programme of hands-on training and follow-up support to assist country offices in undertaking evaluations. The programme is aimed not only at developing the capacity of country offices to evaluate humanitarian action but also to produce a set of evaluations. It is expected that the programme will boost coverage in the coming years.

40. In 2016, the programme supported the evaluation of humanitarian activities in 17 countries, including some in very challenging situations. Three of these evaluations were completed and submitted in 2016, with a dozen more expected to be reported in 2017. In addition, the Evaluation Office is preparing a synthesis of available evaluations of humanitarian response, due for submission to the Executive Board in September 2017.

41. Although gender equality is an important cross-cutting issue under the Strategic Plan, it was the specific focus of only one evaluation report reviewed. However, it can be noted that, between 2012 and 2015, there was an increase in the share of evaluations of sectoral topics that also addressed gender equality, equity

[18] Three reports could not be classified under a specific topic and were excluded from the analysis.
[19] UNICEF GEROS meta-analysis 2015.

and human rights as key themes. The "United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF): Review of development effectiveness, 2012-2015", commissioned in 2016, also provides a strong indication that UNICEF has responded appropriately by refocusing evaluation attention to these themes.[20] The review shows that, compared with a similar exercise undertaken in 2012, there was an increase in the share of evaluations that addressed gender equality (58 of 66), equity (54 of 66) and human rights-based approaches to programming (39 of 66) as key elements. Inclusion of these themes in the majority of the evaluations has arguably reduced the need for evaluations specifically focused on them.

42. Analysis of the topical distribution over time shows some significant shifts. In 2015, there was an increase in the percentage of sector-specific evaluations, with 84 per cent of the evaluations focused on a specific sector. This was an increase from 66 per cent and 41 per cent reported in 2014 and 2012, respectively. Conversely, as noted above, there was a decline in the share of evaluation reports that specifically addressed cross-cutting issues: from 9 per cent in 2014 to only 5 per cent in 2015. One remarkable feature was the increase in the percentage of evaluation reports focused on child protection, which rose from 6 per cent in 2014 to 25 per cent in 2015.

Table 3
Topical distribution of evaluation reports, 2010-2015

	Percentage			
Topic	*2010*	*2012*	*2014*	*2015*
Sector specific, by key results area of the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017	66	41	66	84
Child survival and development		26	23	22
Health			13	15
Nutrition			0	1
Water, sanitation and hygiene			10	6
Education	15	13	32	28
Child protection	15	8	6	25
HIV/AIDS	10	5	4	7
Social inclusion	1	1	1	2
Programmes covering several sectors	34	43	16	13
Cross-cutting themes	–	10	9	5
Organizational performance/other	–	6	9	3

Source: GEROS

Indicator 3: Types of evaluation conducted

43. Analysis of evaluation reports submitted in 2015 in terms of the results level assessed presents a clear focus on higher-level results. The great majority of evaluations were pitched at the outcome level (61 per cent) and the impact level (29 per cent) rather than the output level (10 per cent). This focus on higher-level results indicates an appropriate use of evaluation in understanding UNICEF contributions and achievements.

44. Further analysis (see table 4) reveals that the majority of outcome-level evaluations were rated "highly satisfactory" or "outstanding" and none were rated

[20] www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_94430.html

"unsatisfactory". In contrast, well over half of the impact-level evaluations reviewed displayed some shortcomings. This suggests that UNICEF capacity is highest in the areas in which it has the most practice and experience, such as designing and implementing programmes and evaluations at the outcome level. This has significant implications for the overall quality of the evaluation portfolio, as examined in the segment on the quality of UNICEF evaluation reports.

Table 4
Evaluation focus and quality, 2015

	Quality				
Focus	*Outstanding*	*Highly satisfactory*	*Mostly satisfactory*	*Unsatisfactory*	*Total*
Impact		10	15	1	26
Outcome	3	31	21		55
Output	1	3	3	2	9
Total	**4**	**44**	**39**	**3**	**90**

Source: GEROS.

45. Analysis of the evaluation reports submitted in 2015 indicates that most of the evaluations were managed directly by UNICEF offices. UNICEF-managed evaluations accounted for 72 per cent of the evaluation portfolio, while joint United Nations-managed, joint country-managed and country-led evaluations accounted for 18 per cent, 3 per cent and 1 per cent, respectively. The management of 6 per cent of the evaluation reports could not be ascertained.

46. Analysis of the evaluation reports submitted in 2015 indicates that the purpose of the evaluations was fairly evenly divided among formative evaluations (forward-looking and focused on learning), summative evaluations (backward-looking, usually with a strong focus on accountability) and evaluations that were both summative and formative (see table 5). This suggests, overall, an appropriate deployment of evaluation to support not only "real-time" learning, but also accountability and future improvement.

Table 5
Evaluation purpose, 2015

Purpose	*Number*	*Percentage*
Formative	23	26
Summative	30	33
Summative and formative	37	41

Source: GEROS.

Indicator 4: Quality of UNICEF evaluation reports

47. The following findings are based on the quantitative and qualitative analysis of data from the GEROS Evaluation Quality Assurance and United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (SWAP) reviews of 90 UNICEF evaluation reports submitted to the Evaluation and Research Database in 2015.

48. In 2015, the majority of evaluation reports were almost equally divided between the ratings of "highly satisfactory" (49 per cent) and "mostly satisfactory" (43 per cent) (see table 6). Four reports (4 per cent) were rated "outstanding" and three "unsatisfactory". In other words, 53 per cent of the reports submitted were deemed "good", i.e., "highly satisfactory" or better, while only 3 per cent were deemed "unsatisfactory". Nevertheless, 43 per cent of the evaluations assessed showed some shortcomings and further analysis, below, explores why this might be so.

49. The quality of evaluation reports varies considerably by sector. Most of the evaluation reports on humanitarian action and WASH were found to be "highly satisfactory" or better (although with small sample sizes). The majority of evaluation reports in areas concerned with child protection, HIV/AIDS and social inclusion as well as multisector evaluations were also found to be "highly satisfactory". However, less than half of the 24 evaluation reports in the education sector were rated "satisfactory", and only 4 of the 13 evaluation reports in the health sector were rated "satisfactory".

50. Overall, the ratings indicate a sharp decline in the quality of evaluation reports submitted in 2015 compared with those submitted in 2014. While 74 per cent of UNICEF evaluations submitted in 2014 were rated as "highly satisfactory" or "outstanding", only 53 per cent of the 2015 submissions achieved such ratings. At the same time, evaluation reports rated as "mostly satisfactory" increased from 23 per cent in 2014 to 43 per cent in 2015, while the percentage of evaluations rated as "unsatisfactory" remained low, at 3 per cent.

51. Results for evaluations submitted in 2016 indicate a much more positive picture, however. Among the 101 evaluations rated, 74 per cent are judged to be "highly satisfactory" or "outstanding" and only one evaluation is rated as "unsatisfactory". This indicates that the drop in quality observed in evaluations submitted in 2015 was an anomaly, and that the improving trend reported in previous years has resumed.

Table 6
Quality of completed evaluations, 2009-2015, by percentage

	Year				
Quality rating	2009	2012	2014	2015	2016
Outstanding	4	3	6	4	6
Highly satisfactory	32	59	68	49	68
Mostly satisfactory	34	30	23	43	25
Unsatisfactory	30	8	3	3	1

Source: GEROS.

52. Nevertheless, the dip in the quality of the 2015 evaluation reports was significant and calls for explanation. Further, to reverse this decline, it is important to understand not only the likely causes, but also to verify whether the decline actually occurred or was an effect of inconsistent measurement.

53. The decline in quality in 2015 coincided with a change in the external firm that provides the quality assurance on UNICEF evaluation reports. This raises the question of whether the standard of assessment has become more rigorous, resulting in stricter ratings. The Evaluation Office took steps to manage this risk by providing intensive training to the new company so that the same standards would be applied and by the close monitoring of the quality review process. The Evaluation Office is confident that consistent standards were applied.

54. The meta-analysis of the ratings reveals a more significant issue. The percentage of reports rated as meeting UNICEF standards appears to be proportional to the percentage of reports of outcome-level evaluations. Among evaluation reports submitted in 2015, 62 per cent of reports on outcome evaluations were rated as "highly satisfactory" or better, while only 38 per cent of reports on impact evaluations were so rated. Further, the proportion of reports concerned with impact evaluations was higher than in previous years. Taken together, these factors seem to have contributed to the overall reduction in quality noted for 2015. The implication is that a more diverse portfolio of evaluation types makes it more difficult to consistently deliver reports that meet the required quality standards. This further implies that additional support is required to ensure that all types of evaluations (and the associated evaluation reports) reach the required level of quality. Further monitoring is required to confirm this hypothesis.

55. Additional support for the proposition that it can be difficult to sustain quality in the portfolio when addressing complex topics or applying advanced methods derives from an examination of the evaluations receiving lower ratings. Among the evaluations submitted in 2015 that were rated "mostly satisfactory" appears a cluster of six evaluations of health systems strengthening, a new and challenging area of work for UNICEF. This points to the conclusion that, while it is important to maintain quality, it is also important to allow space for innovation and learning. Rating and reporting are important mechanisms for supporting learning. Accordingly, for each quality assessment of an evaluation, executive feedback is provided to the office submitting the evaluation.

United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

56. UNICEF monitors and reports on its evaluation performance against key indicators set out in the SWAP. For evaluations submitted in 2015, the aggregated average score for UNICEF was 6.36, which is classified as "approaching requirements". This represents a year-on-year improvement, with UNICEF reporting a rating of 6, "approaching requirements", in the 2014 cycle. This rating is consistent with that of similar United Nations entities, including the United Nations Development Programme, UN-Women and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

57. Reports were found to be "satisfactory" with regard to integrating gender in the scope, indicators, criteria and questions of evaluations, but the use of gender analysis to inform evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations was rated lower, and needs improvement.

Indicator 5: Use of evaluation, including management responses

58. The management response is a key feature of the evaluation cycle. In its decision 2016/7, the Executive Board urged UNICEF to prioritize the timely delivery of management responses and to improve the rate of implementation of agreed evaluation recommendations. In response, UNICEF has taken action, in line with the evaluation policy, to ensure that all evaluation reports that are uploaded into the Evaluation and Research Database are accompanied with a management response. Of evaluation reports submitted in 2015, 86 reports (95 per cent) were followed by a management response, an increase of 17 per cent over the 79 per cent reported for evaluations submitted in 2014.

59. Management response actions are supposed to be completed within one year. For evaluations submitted in 2015, 76 per cent of the agreed actions set out in management responses were reported to have been completed (33 per cent) or under

implementation (43 per cent) by the end of 2016. This repeats the rate achieved for evaluations submitted in 2014.

60. Analysis by region reveals considerable variation in the completion and implementation of agreed actions. For evaluations submitted in 2015, MENA has reported good progress, with 85 per cent completion of agreed actions, 9 per cent under implementation and only 6 per cent not started. ESAR has also made good progress, reporting 62 per cent of agreed actions completed, 33 per cent under implementation and only 6 per cent not started. EAPR has also reported above-average performance (56 per cent completion, 31 per cent under way). However, other regions are lagging to varying degrees. Once again, good performance in some regions demonstrates what is possible, while flagging the need for greater consistency across regions.

Indicator 6: Corporate spending on evaluation

61. The UNICEF evaluation policy sets a target for spending on evaluation of 1 per cent of programme expenditure. The Executive Board has been monitoring this closely and has urged UNICEF to accelerate progress towards achieving that target.

62. At the end of 2016, evaluation budget use was reported to have reached $50,121,716, representing 0.8 per cent of total programme budget use.[21] The corresponding figure at the end of 2015 was $44,959,817, which again represented 0.8 per cent of total programme budget use. While these figures show a significant increase in budget use for evaluation, there was evidently no progress towards the policy target of 1 per cent over the year.

63. The figures are drawn from VISION, the UNICEF enterprise resource management platform. In 2016, the method used to calculate evaluation budget use was reviewed, revealing that important areas of expenditure were being omitted. Consequently, the Evaluation Office revised the methodology to include all expenditure on evaluation that can be readily tracked in UNICEF systems.[22] The same methodology was used to calculate the figures for 2015 and 2016 presented above.

Indicator 7: Corporate-level evaluations

64. Activities considered under this indicator are corporate-level evaluations undertaken by the Evaluation Office. These include evaluations listed under the plan for global thematic evaluations 2014-2017 (E/ICEF/2014/3) and the review and update for 2016-2017 (E/ICEF/2016/3).

65. In 2016, the Evaluation Office completed and published the following evaluations and related studies:

(a) Global thematic evaluations:[23]

(i) "Evaluation of UNICEF's PMTCT/Paediatric HIV care and treatment programme";[24]

[21] Budget use, as recorded in VISION, the UNICEF enterprise resource management platform, includes actual expenditure and spending commitments.

[22] Previously, evaluation budget use estimation was computed against regular resources and other resources — regular. For a more complete estimation of evaluation budget use, the calculation now includes evaluation costs recorded in several other budget lines.

[23] Global thematic evaluations are wide-ranging exercises intended to take a comprehensive view of the work of UNICEF in a particular subject area or theme and to provide, in each case, findings, conclusions and recommendations of strategic relevance to the organization.

[24] www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_95015.html.

(ii) "Communication for development: An evaluation of UNICEF's capacity and action";[25]

(b) Evaluations of UNICEF humanitarian action:

(i) "Evaluation of UNICEF's response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa 2014-2015";[26]

(ii) "The UNICEF response to the crisis in the Central African Republic";[27]

(c) Evaluation synthesis studies, based on meta-analysis of existing evaluations:

(i) "Equity, sustainability and scalability in UNICEF WASH programming: Evidence from UNICEF evaluations 2007-2015";[28]

(ii) "United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF): Review of development effectiveness, 2012-2015";[29]

(d) Country reports on developmental evaluation[30] activities of the UNICEF Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy Programme in Ethiopia[31] and Myanmar.[32]

Senior management has prepared management responses to the recommendations presented by these evaluations.

66. The Evaluation Office also participated in the management of several joint evaluations, as noted elsewhere in the present report. In collaboration with the Evaluation Office of the United Nations Population Fund, work continued on a joint health sector evaluation: End Line Evaluation of the H4+ partnership joint support to improve women's and children's health 2011-2016.

67. Progress in delivering the evaluations listed in the plan for global thematic evaluations is outlined in the annex.

VI. Assessments of the evaluation function

68. Section VI provides information on several assessments of the evaluation function in UNICEF, which have been completed. In addition, an external peer review is under way.

A. United Nations Evaluation Group/Developmental Assistance Committee peer review

69. The Executive Board has requested that an external peer review of the evaluation function be conducted, in line with a provision in the revised evaluation policy. The Organization for Economic Development-Developmental Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC), the Network on Development Evaluation (EvalNet) and UNEG maintain a joint task force to support professional peer reviews of the evaluation function in United Nations organizations. Each peer review is intended to

[25] www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_C4D.html.
[26] www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_95016.html.
[27] www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_92843.html.
[28] www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_94431.html.
[29] www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_94430.html.
[30] Developmental evaluation is an approach to understanding the activities of an intervention operating in a dynamic, novel or complex environment.
[31] www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/files/UNICEF-PBEA_LR_DE-Ethiopia.pdf.
[32] www.unicef.org/myanmar/PBEA_Developmental_Evaluation_Myanmar.pdf.

identify good practices and opportunities to further strengthen the evaluation function in the agency under review, with a view to contributing to improved performance and results. UNICEF was one of the first agencies to be subject to peer review, in 2006, which led to the preparation of the first UNICEF evaluation policy. To date, 16 UNEG/DAC peer reviews have been conducted.

70. By the end of 2016, arrangements for a UNEG/DAC peer review were in place, to be taken forward by a panel chaired by the Evaluation Director of the United Nations Environment Programme. Terms of reference were agreed for an assessment of the independence, credibility and utility of the evaluation function in UNICEF. These were focused on the independence and credibility of the function; the quality, use and follow-up of evaluations across the organization to promote accountability, learning and improvement; and the leadership and vision shown by the UNICEF evaluation function, including its capacity to adjust to the changing environment.

71. Arrangements were made for the panel to visit several UNICEF locations in 2017, with a view to delivering a report to UNICEF management and the Executive Board in the course of the year. It is noteworthy that this peer review will be the first to use the revised UNEG evaluation norms and standards, approved in 2016.

B. Self-assessment of the UNICEF evaluation function

72. In 2016, the Evaluation Office initiated a self-assessment of the evaluation function in UNICEF, with the purpose of generating evidence to inform the scheduled external peer review; assessing how well UNICEF was responding to ongoing efforts among UNEG members to increased professionalism; and informing a possible future revision of the UNICEF evaluation policy.

73. The self-assessment, coordinated by the Evaluation Office, was underpinned by a methodology that included the collation and review of relevant documentation, several online surveys and various participatory consultations. Recalling that evaluation is a shared function, particular attention was given not only to the roles and perceptions of monitoring and evaluation staff across UNICEF, but also to the views of users of evaluation evidence, including senior management.

74. Shadowing the approach of the external peer review, the self-assessment focused on the UNEG norms and standards, especially those relating to the independence, credibility and utility of the function. The results were widely shared with staff and management and with the incoming external peer review panel.

75. Key findings include the following:

(a) The evaluation function in UNICEF is perceived as credible by staff and management across the organization;

(b) The revised evaluation policy is widely known and accepted as the framework guiding evaluation practice in UNICEF. However, some aspects could be adjusted and updated;

(c) The highly decentralized evaluation model is perceived as an asset for the organization. However, the three-tier structure poses challenges for the coherent management of the function;

(d) While the evaluation function is considered to enjoy a reasonably high level of independence, there are some issues related to independence that would benefit from further reflection. It is recognized that it is difficult to maintain separate responsibilities for evaluation in small country offices; that dependence on programme budgets may, without appropriate safeguards, put the independence of

evaluation efforts at risk; and that, at the corporate level, the appropriate separation of roles in sector teams is also needed;

(e) Evaluation is generally considered useful, but a more user-friendly and less technocratic and compliance-driven approach is needed. Timeliness, knowledge management and quality of recommendations are all areas for attention;

(f) There is widespread concern among monitoring and evaluation staff that they have insufficient time to devote to evaluation: in small offices, they report spending less than 15 per cent of their time on evaluation matters. In many cases, the same staff members are dealing not only with evaluation but also with performance monitoring and reporting and the monitoring of children's rights, as well as with research and, in some cases, social policy. While this is already unrealistic, growing demands relating to results-based management requirements add to the burden;

(g) Staff capacities vary and attention is needed to strengthen skills, knowledge and systems at all levels, including among users of evaluation evidence.

76. Overall, while the institutional environment for evaluation at UNICEF was found to be supportive and demand for evaluation was seen to be high, capacities and resources to respond to demand are constrained.

C. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF): Review of development effectiveness, 2012-2015[11]

77. In 2016, the Evaluation Office commissioned a review to consider how effectively UNICEF had been achieving results for children, as assessed through careful and methodical scrutiny of a sample of 66 evaluations reporting in the period 2012-2015. The review included systematic attention to the contribution of monitoring and evaluation to the organization's performance and results.

78. The findings regarding the use of evaluation evidence to improve effectiveness were "strongly positive", with 80 per cent of the sample reporting findings assessed as "satisfactory" (21 per cent) or "highly satisfactory" (59 per cent) (see p. 47).

79. The review lists factors that contribute to the use of evaluation to improve effectiveness and presents the observation that evaluation reports "often noted…that lessons from the evaluation of a previous project or programme were used to strengthen the design of the current program" (p. 48). Several evaluations identified the following positive factors promoting the use of evaluation results to improve effectiveness:

(a) Strong baseline collection;

(b) Use of external evaluators and external evaluations to support learning;

(c) Systematic approach to evaluation with a commitment to regular, ongoing evaluations and to covering most programmes;

(d) Commitment to using the results of all types of evaluations (formative, midterm, end of programme or project) to improve programme design.

80. Negative factors were also identified from the evaluations reviewed. These factors "were focused on those projects and programmes which did not seem to be subject to regular evaluations" (p. 49), specifically:

[11] www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_94430.html

(a) A primary focus on project monitoring with inadequate attention by UNICEF and the implementing partner to evaluation;

(b) The absence of any commitment to, or mention of, a regular programme of evaluation so that there is no culture of evaluation embedded in the programme;

(c) The renewal of programmes without a prior evaluation;

(d) A focus on reporting outputs and neglecting learning and accountability.

81. The review also assessed the effectiveness of systems and processes for evaluation in UNICEF. Here, 70 per cent of the evaluations reviewed reported positive findings on this issue. The review further notes that the evaluations reviewed in 2016 were more likely to report positive results on the use of evaluations to improve performance and results than those reviewed for a similar exercise in 2012.[34] The review observes that "evaluations reviewed in 2016 were of generally higher quality and suggests that UNICEF has been effective in improving the quality and utility of evaluations conducted in the past three years" (p. 47). Specific findings on gender are noted in section III of the present report.

82. These observations confirm the general picture of increasing effectiveness and utility and of an evaluation function in UNICEF broadly fit for purpose.

D. Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network UNICEF institutional assessment report 2015-2016

83. The Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network review provides a granular assessment of UNICEF, looking in fine detail at the agency's organizational and development effectiveness, including the evaluation function. Assessed against a set of microindicators, the review rates the evaluation function as "highly satisfactory" and several other factors as "satisfactory" or "highly satisfactory" (see table 7). However, UNICEF performance in the application of evaluative evidence was found to be weak.

Table 7
Evidence-based planning and programming applied

No	*Microindicator*	*Rating*
8.1	A corporate independent evaluation function exists	Highly satisfactory
8.2	Consistent, independent evaluation of results (coverage)	Satisfactory
8.3	Systems applied to ensure the quality of evaluations	Highly satisfactory
8.4	Mandatory demonstration of the evidence base to design new interventions	Unsatisfactory
8.5	Poorly performing interventions proactively identified, tracked and addressed	Highly satisfactory
8.6	Clear accountability system ensures responses and follow-up to and use of evaluation recommendations	Satisfactory
8.7	Uptake of lessons learned and best practices from evaluations	Satisfactory

Source: Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network report, annex 1.

84. This weakness is reflected in the conclusion that "performance data is not yet always systematically used in planning and decision-making or to inform programmatic adjustments." Although it was recognized that "the quality of

[34] Organization for Economic Development-Developmental Assistance Committee, "Review of UNICEF's development effectiveness 2009-2011: Final report" (2013).

evaluations is improving overall, supported by robust quality assurance systems," it was also noted that there were "challenges in sustaining coverage levels" and that "the extraction and use of lessons from evaluations [was] not yet systematic or comprehensive" (p. 27).

85. Despite the positive ratings noted above and continuing improvements in the evaluation function, these judgments are borne out by the information presented elsewhere in the present annual report as well as in previous ones, and, usefully, point towards areas for improvement.

VII. Conclusion

86. The information presented in the present report confirms that, overall, UNICEF has an effective evaluation function that continues to develop and improve. The organization's highly decentralized structure presents practical management challenges: greater consistency in performance over time and across regions is needed. Further, as the development agenda becomes more complex and the role of UNICEF changes, there is a need to revisit methodological approaches and provide staff and development partners with appropriate tools and methods to conduct useful and insightful evaluations. A largely decentralized structure supports rapid, localized and informal learning, but more formal mechanisms for the uptake and application of evidence and lessons are also needed as UNICEF itself grows in size and complexity and engages with ever-wider stakeholder networks.

87. However, the recent reviews and assessments have reaffirmed that much of the strength of the evaluation function in UNICEF is the wide distribution of evaluation accountabilities and responsibilities across the organization and the engagement and enthusiasm of staff and management in efforts to deepen understanding of what works for children in a rapidly changing world.

VIII. Draft decision

The Executive Board,

Takes note of the annual report for 2016 on the evaluation function in UNICEF (E/ICEF/2017/11).

Annex

Status of evaluations proposed in the plan for global thematic evaluations for 2016

1. In 2014, the Executive Board endorsed the plan for global thematic evaluation 2014-2017 (E/ICEF/2014/3). It was revised and updated, with the revised plan endorsed by the Board in 2016 (E/ICEF/2016/3).

2. The table below sets out the status of evaluations planned for 2016. A list of all evaluations completed in 2016 appears in section V (indicator 7: corporate-level evaluations) of the present report.

Table 1
Topics proposed for global thematic evaluations, 2016

Type	*Topic*	*Status at end of 2016 and schedule for completion*
Major evaluation	Strengthening national health systems and capacity	Thorough scoping exercise completed and major evaluation launched Country case studies: Q4 2017 Comprehensive synthesis: Q3 2018
Major evaluation	Girls' education and gender equality	In progress Final report: Q2 2017
Major evaluation	Rural/small town water supply programming	In progress Final report: Q4 2017
Major evaluation	Preventing stunting: improving equitable use of nutritional support and care	In progress Final report: Q2 2017
Evaluations	Preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV	Completed
Evaluation	Health: H4+ joint programme on maternal, newborn and child health (joint)	In progress Final report: Q2 2017
Evaluation synthesis	Synthesis of evaluation findings in the HIV and AIDS sector	In progress Final report: Q2 2017
Evaluation synthesis	United Nations Childrens' Fund (UNICEF): Review of development effectiveness, 2012-2015	Completed